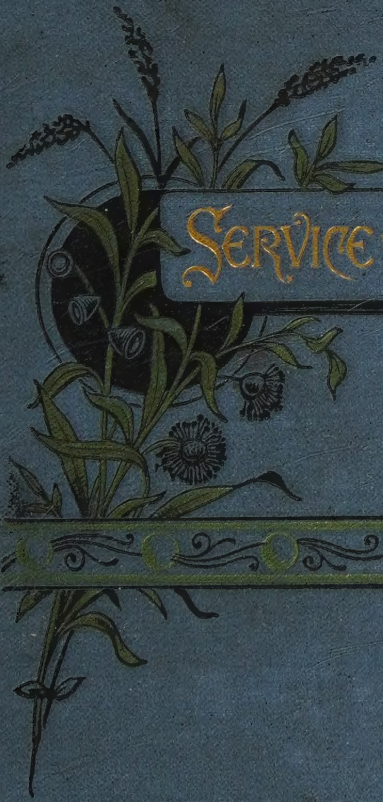

FROM SERVICE TO LIBERTY

JOHN NEWTON.

FROM THE SERVICE OF SIN

TO

LIBERTY IN CHRIST JESUS:

BEING A NARRATIVE OF

THE LIFE OF JOHN NEWTON,

AUTHOR OF THE HYMN
"HOW SWEET THE NAME OF JESUS SOUNDS,"
AND MANY OTHERS.

TOLD BY HIMSELF IN LETTERS
TO A FRIEND.

A. S. ROUSE,
15 & 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.
1892.

PREFACE.

THE first of the following letters is so well adapted as an introduction to the rest, that to trouble the reader with a long preface would be quite needless. Some verbal narrations of the facts awakened a desire in me to see a more connected account of them, which the author very obligingly consented to, having, at that time, no intention of its being made public. But the repeated solicitations of friends have at last prevailed; and, indeed, the publication is the more needful, as several imperfect copies have been handed about, and there has been cause to fear that some surreptitious edition might steal through the press into the hands of the public.

I have, therefore, with the consent of the author, published these letters in their original form. They were written in haste, as letters of friendship: the style, as well as the narrative itself, is plain and easy. I can only add my best wishes that the great truths they contain may prove as edifying as the facts are striking and entertaining.

T. HAWEIS.

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FROM

THE SERVICE OF SIN

TO

LIBERTY IN CHRIST JESUS.

LETTER I.

Dear Sir,—I make no doubt but you have at times had pleasing reflections upon what was said to the Israelites in Deut. viii. 2. They were then in the wilderness, surrounded with difficulties, which were greatly aggravated by their own distrust and perverseness. They had experienced a variety of trials, the design of which they could not as yet understand. They frequently lost sight of God's gracious purposes in their favour, and were much discouraged by reason of the way. To compose and animate their minds, Moses here suggests to them that there was a future happy time drawing near, when their journey and warfare should be finished; that they should soon be put in possession of the promised land, and have rest from all their fears and troubles; and then it would give them pleasure to look back upon what

they now found so uneasy to bear. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee . . . in the wilderness."

The importance and comfort of these words is still greater, if we consider them in a spiritual sense, and apply them to all who are passing through the wilderness of this world to a heavenly Canaan; who, by faith in God, are expecting to enter an eternal rest. The hope of that glorious inheritance inspires us with some degree of courage and zeal to press forward to where Jesus has already entered as our Forerunner; and through whom we are more than conquerors over all that would withstand our progress. (Rom. viii. 37.)

We have, however, not yet attained. We still feel the infirmities of a fallen nature. Through the remains of ignorance and unbelief, we often mistake the Lord's dealings with us, and are ready to complain; when, if we knew all, we should rather rejoice. But to us likewise there is a time coming, when our warfare shall be accomplished, our views enlarged, and our light increased. Then with what transports of adoration and love shall we look back upon the way by which the Lord led us! We shall then see and acknowledge, that mercy and goodness directed every step; we shall see, that what our ignorance once called adversities and evils, were in reality blessings, which we could not have done well without; that nothing befell us without a cause.

And even in this imperfect state, though we are seldom able to judge aright of our present circumstances, yet if we look upon the years of our past life, and compare the trials we have been brought through, with the frame of our minds under each successive period; if we consider how wonderfully one thing has been connected with another; so that what we now number amongst our greatest advantages, perhaps, took their first rise from incidents which we thought hardly worth our notice; and that we have sometimes escaped the greatest dangers that threatened us, not by any wisdom or foresight of our own, but by the intervention of circumstances which we neither desired nor thought of: when we compare and consider these things by the light afforded us in the Holy Scripture, we may collect indisputable proof, from the narrow circle of our own concerns, that the wise and good providence of God watches over His people from the earliest moment of their life, overrules and guards them through all their wanderings in a state of ignorance, leads them in a way that they know not, till at length His providence and grace concur in those events and impressions, which bring them to the knowledge of Him and themselves.

I am persuaded that every believer will, upon due reflection, see enough in his own case to confirm this remark; but not all in the same degree. The outward circumstances of many have been uniform, they have known but little variety in

life; and with respect to their inward change, it has been effected in a secret way, unnoticed by others, and almost unperceived by themselves. The Lord has spoken to them, not in thunder and tempest; but with a still small voice He has drawn them gradually to Himself, so that though they have a happy assurance that they know and love Him, and are passed from death unto life; yet of the precise time and manner, they can give little account.

Others He seems to select, in order to show the exceeding riches of His grace, and the greatness of His mighty power. (Rom. xi. 4; James i. 18.) He suffers the natural rebellion and wickedness of their hearts to have full scope. While sinners of less note are cut off with little warning, these are spared, though sinning with a high hand, and as it were studying their own destruction. At length, when all that knew them are perhaps expecting to hear that they are made signal instances of divine vengeance, the Lord (whose thoughts are high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isaiah lv. 6–9) is pleased to pluck them as brands out of the fire, and to make them monuments of His mercy, for the encouragement of others: they are, beyond expectation, convinced, pardoned, and changed.

A case of this sort indicates a divine power no less than the creation of a world: it is evidently the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in the eyes of all those who are not blinded by prejudice

and unbelief. Such was the persecuting Saul: his heart was full of enmity against Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore he persecuted and made havoc of His disciples. He had been a terror to the church at Jerusalem, and was going to Damascus with the same views. He was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against all that loved the Lord Jesus. He thought little of the mischief he had hitherto done. His desire was to destroy every Christian. Such was his spirit and temper, when the Lord Jesus, whom he hated and opposed, checked him in the height of his rage, called this bitter persecutor to the honour of an apostle, and inspired him with great zeal and earnestness, to preach that faith which he so lately destroyed. (Acts ix.; 1 Tim. i. 12–16.)

Nor are we without remarkable displays of the same sovereign, efficacious grace in our own times. I may particularly mention the instance of the late Colonel Gardiner. If any real satisfaction could be found in a sinful course, he would have met with it; for he pursued the experiment with all possible advantages. He was habituated to evil; and many uncommon, almost miraculous deliverances, made no impression upon him. Yet he likewise was brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and the bright example of his life, illustrated and diffused by the account of him, published since his death, has afforded an occasion of much praise to God, and much comfort to His people.

After the mention of such names, can you permit me, sir, to add MY OWN? If I do, it must be with a very humbling distinction. These once eminent sinners proved eminent Christians. Much had been forgiven them, therefore they loved much. (Luke vii. 40–50.) St. Paul could say, "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) Colonel Gardiner likewise was as a city set upon a hill, a burning and a shining light. The manner of his conversion was hardly more singular than the whole course of his conversation from that time to his death. Here, alas! the parallel greatly fails. It has not been thus with me. I must take deserved shame to myself, that I have made very unsuitable returns for what I have received. But if the question is only concerning the patience and long-suffering of God, the wonderful interposition of His providence in favour of an unworthy sinner, the power of His grace in softening the hardest heart, and the riches of His mercy in pardoning the most enormous and aggravated transgressions: in these respects I know no case more extraordinary than my own. And indeed many persons, to whom I have related my story, have thought it worthy of being preserved.

I never gave any brief account, in writing, of the Lord's dealing with me, till very lately; for I was deterred on the one hand by the great

difficulty of writing properly where SELF is concerned; on the other, by the ill use which persons of corrupt and perverse minds are often known to make of such instances. The Psalmist reminds us that a reserve in these things is proper, when he says, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." (Psalm lxvi. 16; Matt. vii. 6.) And our Lord cautions us not to cast our pearls before swine. Some of the pearls of a Christian are, perhaps, his choice experiences of the Lord's power and love in the concerns of his soul; and these should not be at all adventures made public, lest we give occasion to earthly and grovelling souls to profane what they cannot understand. These were the chief reasons of my backwardness; but a few weeks since, I yielded to the judgment and request of a much respected friend, and sent him a relation at large, in a series of eight letters.

The event has been what I little expected. I wrote to one person, but my letters have fallen into many hands. Amongst others, I find they have reached your notice; and instead of blaming me for being too tedious and circumstantial, which was the fault I feared I had committed, you are pleased to desire a still more distinct detail. As you and others of my friends apprehend that my compliance with this request may be attended with some good effect, may promote the pleasing work of praise to our adorable Redeemer, or confirm

the faith of some or other of His people; I am willing to obey. I give up my own reasonings upon the inexpediency of so inconsiderable a person as myself adventuring in so public a point of view. If God may be glorified on my behalf, and His children in any measure comforted or instructed by what I have to declare of His goodness, I shall be satisfied; and am content to leave all other possible consequences of this undertaking in His hands, who does all things well.

I must again have recourse to my memory, as I retained no copies of the letters you saw. So far as I can recollect what I then wrote, I will relate, but shall not affect a needless variety of phrase and manner, merely because those have been already perused by many. I may, perhaps, in some places, when repeating the same facts, express myself in nearly the same words; yet I propose, according to your desire, to make this relation more explicit and particular than the former, especially towards the close, which I wound up hastily, lest my friend should be wearied.

I hope you will likewise excuse me if I do not strictly confine myself to narration, but now and then intersperse such reflections as may offer while I am writing: and though you have signified your intentions of communicating to others what I send you, I must not, on this account, affect a conciseness and correctness which is not my natural talent, lest the whole should appear

dry and constrained. I shall therefore, if possible, think only of you, and write with that confidence and freedom which your friendship and candour deserve. This sheet may stand as a preface, and I purpose, as far as I can, to cease for a time from many other engagements, until I have completed the task you have assigned me.

In the meantime, I entreat the assistance of your prayers, that in this, and all my poor attempts, I may have a single eye to His glory, who was pleased to call me out of horrid darkness into the marvellous light of His gospel.

I am, with sincere respect,
Dear Sir,
Your obliged and affectionate Servant.

LETTER II.

Sir,—I can sometimes feel a pleasure in repeating the grateful acknowledgment of David, "O Lord, I am Thy servant, the son of Thine handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bands." The tender mercies of God towards me were manifest in the first moment of my life: I was born, as it were, in His house, and dedicated to Him in my infancy. My mother, as I have heard from many, was a pious, experienced Christian. She was a dissenter, in communion with the late Dr. Jennings. I was her only child, and as she was of a weak constitution and a retired disposition,

almost her whole employment was the care of my education. I have some faint remembrance of her care and instructions. At a time when I could not be more than three years of age, she herself taught me English, and with so much success (as I had something of a forward turn) that when I was four years old I could read with propriety in any common book that offered. She stored my memory, which was then very retentive, with many valuable pieces, chapters, and portions of Scripture, hymns, and poems. My temper at that time seemed quite suitable to her wishes: I had little inclination to the noisy sports of children, but was best pleased when in her company, and always as willing to learn as she was to teach me. How far the best education may fall short of reaching the heart will strongly appear in the sequel of my history; yet, I think, for the encouragement of pious parents to go on in the good way, of doing their part faithfully to form their children's minds, I may properly propose myself as an instance. Though in process of time I sinned away all the advantages of these early impressions, yet they were for a great while a restraint upon me; they returned again and again, and it was very long before I could wholly shake them off; and when the Lord at length opened my eyes, I found a great benefit from the recollection of them. Further, my dear mother, besides the pains she took with me, often commended me with many prayers and tears to God, and I doubt

not but to this hour I reap the fruits of these prayers.

My mother observed with peculiar pleasure my early progress, and intended from the first to bring me up with a view to the ministry, if the Lord should so incline my heart. In my sixth year I began to learn Latin; but before I had time to know much about it, the intended plan of my education was broken short: the Lord's designs were far beyond the views of an earthly parent. He was pleased to reserve me for an unusual proof of His patience, providence, and grace, and therefore overruled the purpose of my friends, by depriving me of this excellent parent, when I was something under seven years old. I was born the 24th of July, 1725, and she died the 11th of that month, 1732.

My father was then at sea. He was a commander in the Mediterranean trade at that time. He came home the following year, and soon after married again. Thus I passed into different hands. I was well treated in all other respects; but the loss of my mother's instructions was not repaired. I was now permitted to mingle with careless and profane children, and soon began to learn their ways. Soon after my father's second marriage I was sent to a boarding-school in Essex, where the imprudent severity of the master almost broke my spirit and relish for books. With him I forgot the first principles and rules of arithmetic, which my mother had taught me years before. I

stayed there two years. In the latter of the two, a new usher coming, who observed and suited my temper, I took to the Latin with great eagerness; so that before I was ten years old, I reached and maintained the first post in the second class, which in that school read Tully and Virgil. I believe I was pushed forward too fast, and therefore, not being grounded, I soon lost much I had learnt, for I left school in my tenth year, and when I long afterwards undertook the Latin language from books, I think I had little advantage from what I had learnt before.

My father's second marriage was from a family in Essex, and when I was eleven years old he took me with him to sea. He was a man of remarkably good sense, and great knowledge of the world. He took great care of my morals, but could not supply my mother's part. Having been educated himself in Spain, he always observed an air of distance and severity in his carriage, which overawed and discouraged my spirit. I was always in fear when before him, and therefore he had the less influence. From that time to the year 1742 I made several voyages, but with considerable intervals between, which were chiefly spent in the country, except a few months in my fifteenth year, when I was placed upon a very advantageous prospect at Alicant, in Spain; but my unsettled behaviour and impatience of restraint rendered that design abortive.

In this period, my temper and conduct were

exceedingly various. At school, or soon after, I had little concern about religion, and easily received very ill impressions. But I was often disturbed with convictions. I was fond of reading from a child; among other books, Burnet's *Christian Oratory* often came in my way; and though I understood but little of it, the course of life therein recommended appeared very desirable, and I was inclined to attempt it. I began to pray, to read the Scriptures, and to keep a sort of diary. I was presently religious in my own eyes; but, alas! this seeming goodness had no solid foundation, but passed away like a morning cloud, or the early dew. I was soon weary, gradually gave it up, and became worse than before: instead of prayer, I learned to curse and blaspheme, and was exceedingly wicked when from under my parent's view. All this was before I was twelve years old.

About that time I had a dangerous fall from a horse. I was thrown I believe within a few inches of a hedgerow newly cut down. I got no hurt, but could not avoid taking notice of a gracious providence in my deliverance; for had I fell upon the stakes, I had inevitably been killed. My conscience suggested to me the dreadful consequences, if in such a state I had been summoned to appear before God. I presently broke off from my profane practices, and appeared quite altered; but it was not long before I declined again. These struggles between sin and

conscience were often repeated; but the consequence was, that every relapse sunk me into still greater depths of wickedness.

I was once roused by the loss of an intimate companion. We had agreed to go on board a man-of-war (I think it was on a Sunday); but I providentially came too late; the boat was overset, and he and several others were drowned. I was invited to the funeral of my play-fellow, and was exceedingly affected, to think that by a delay of a few minutes (which had much displeased and angered me, till I saw the event) my life had been preserved. However, this likewise was soon forgotten.

At another time the perusal of the *Family Instructor* put me upon a partial and transient reformation. In brief, though I cannot distinctly relate particulars, I think I took up and laid aside a religious profession three or four different times before I was sixteen years of age; but all this while my heart was insincere. I often saw a necessity of religion as a means of escaping hell; but I loved sin, and was unwilling to forsake it. Instances of this I can remember were frequent in the midst of all my forms; I was so strangely blind and stupid, that sometimes when I have been determined upon things, which I knew were sinful, and contrary to my duty, I could not go on quietly till I had first dispatched my ordinary talk of prayer, in which I have grudged every moment of my time; and when

this was finished, my conscience was in some measure pacified, and I could rush into folly with little remorse.

My last reform was the most remarkable both for degree and continuance. Of this period, at least of some part of it, I could use the apostle's words, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." I did everything that might be expected from a person entirely ignorant of God's righteousness, and desirous to establish his own. I spent the greatest part of every day in reading the Scriptures, meditation and prayer; I fasted often; I even abstained from all animal food for three months; I would hardly answer a question, for fear of speaking an idle word. I seemed to bemoan my former miscarriages very earnestly, sometimes with tears. In short, I became an ascetic, and endeavoured, so far as my stuation would permit, to renounce society, that I might avoid temptation. I continued in this serious mood (I cannot give it a higher title) for more than two years, without any considerable breaking off. But it was a poor religion; it left me in many respects under the power of sin, and so far as it prevailed, only tended to make me gloomy, stupid, unsociable, and useless.

Such was the frame of my mind when I became acquainted with Lord Shaftesbury. I saw the second volume of his *Characteristics* in a petty shop at Middleburg, in Holland. The title allured me to buy it, and the style and

manner gave me great pleasure in reading, especially the second piece, which his Lordship with great propriety has entitled a "Rhapsody." Nothing could be more suited to the romantic turn of my mind than the address of this pompous declamation. Of the design and tendency I was not aware. I thought the author a most religious person, and that I had only to follow him and be happy. Thus, with fine words and fair speeches, my simple heart was beguiled. This book was always in my hand. I read it till I could very nearly repeat the Rhapsody verbatim from beginning to end. No immediate effect followed, but it operated like a slow poison, and prepared the way for all that followed.

This letter brings my history down to December, 1742. I had then lately returned from a voyage, and my father, not intending me for the sea again, was thinking how to settle me in the world. But I had little life or spirit for business. I knew but little of men or things. I was fond of a visionary scheme of a contemplative life—a medley of religion, philosophy, and indolence; and was quite averse to the thoughts of an industrious application to business. At length a merchant in Liverpool, an intimate friend of my father (to whom, as the instrument of God's goodness, I have since been chiefly indebted for all my earthly comforts), proposed to send me for some years to Jamaica, and to charge himself with the care of my future fortune. I consented

to this, and everything was prepared for my voyage. I was upon the point of setting out the following week. In the meantime my father sent me on some business to a place a few miles beyond Maidstone, in Kent, and this little journey, which was to have been only for three or four days, occasioned a sudden and remarkable turn, which roused me from the habitual indolence I had contracted, and gave rise to the series of uncommon incidents, of which you desire a more particular account. So true it is "that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

I am affectionately,

Yours in the best bonds.

LETTER III.

Dear Sir,—A few days before my intended journey into Kent I received an invitation to visit a family in that county. They were distant relations, and very intimate friends of my dear mother. She died in their house; but a coolness took place upon my father's second marriage, and I had heard nothing of them for many years. As my road lay within half a mile of their house, I obtained my father's leave to call on them. I was, however, very indifferent about it, and sometimes thought of passing on. However, I went. I was known at first sight, before I could tell my

name, and met with the kindest reception, as the child of a dear deceased friend. My friends had two daughters. The eldest (as I understood some years afterwards) had been often considered by her mother and mine, as a future wife for me from the time of her birth. I know, indeed, that intimate friends frequently amuse themselves with such distant prospects for their children, and that they miscarry much oftener than succeed. I do not say that my mother predicted what was to happen, yet there was something remarkable in the manner of its taking place. All intercourse between the families had been long broken off; I was going into a foreign country, and only called to pay a hasty visit; and this I should not have thought of, but for a message received just at that crisis, for I had not been invited at any time before. Thus the circumstances were precarious in the highest degree, and the event was as extraordinary. Almost at the first sight of this girl (for she was then under fourteen) I was impressed with an affection for her, which never abated or lost its influence a single moment in my heart from that hour. In degree, it actually equalled all that the writers of romance have imagined; in duration, it was unalterable. I soon lost all sense of religion, and became deaf to the remonstrances of conscience and prudence; but my regard for her was always the same; and I may perhaps venture to say, that none of the scenes of misery and wickedness I afterwards experienced ever

banished her a single hour together from my waking thoughts for the seven following years.

Give me leave, sir, to reflect a little upon this unexpected incident, and to consider its influence upon my future life, and how far it was subservient to the views of divine providence concerning me, which seem to have been twofold: that by being given up for a while to the consequences of my own wilfulness, and afterwards reclaimed by a high hand, my case, so far as it should be known, might be both a warning and an encouragement to others.

In the first place, hardly anything less than this violent and commanding passion, would have been sufficient to awaken me from the dull melancholy habit I had contracted. I was almost a misanthrope, notwithstanding I so much admired the pictures of virtue and benevolence as drawn by Lord Shaftesbury; but now my reluctance to active life was overpowered at once, and I was willing to be or to do anything, which might subserve the accomplishment of my wishes at some future time.

Farther, when I afterwards made shipwreck of faith, hope, and conscience, my love to this person was the only remaining principle, which in any degree supplied their place; and the bare possibility of seeing her again was the only present and obvious means of restraining me from the most horrid designs against myself and others.

But then the ill effects it brought upon me

counterbalanced these advantages. The interval, usually styled the time of courtship, is indeed a pleasing part of life, where there is a mutual affection, the consent of friends, a reasonable prospect as to settlement, and the whole is conducted in a prudential manner, and in subordination to the will and fear of God. When things are thus situated, it is a blessing to be susceptive of the tender passions; but when these concomitants are wanting, what we call "love" is the most tormenting passion in itself, and the most destructive in its consequences that can be named. And they were all wanting in my case. I durst not mention it to her friends, nor to my own, nor indeed for a considerable time to herself, as I could make no proposals: it remained as a secret fire, locked up in my own breast, which gave me a constant uneasiness. By introducing an idolatrous regard to a creature, it greatly weakened my sense of religion, and made farther way for the entrance of infidel principles; and though it seemed to promise great things, as an incentive to diligence and activity in life, in reality it performed nothing. I often formed great projects in my mind, of what I would willingly do or suffer, for the sake of her I loved; yet, while I could have her company, I was incapable of forcing myself away, to improve opportunities that offered. Still less could it do in regulating my manners. It did not prevent me from engaging in a long train of excess and riot, utterly unworthy

the honourable pretensions I had formed. And though, through the wonderful interposition of divine goodness, the maze of my follies was at length unravelled, and my wishes crowned in such a manner as overpaid my sufferings; yet, I am sure, I would not go through the same series of trouble again, to possess all the treasures of both the Indies.

I have enlarged more than I intended on this point, as perhaps these papers may be useful to caution others against indulging an ungovernable passion.

My heart being now fixed, and riveted to a particular object, I considered everything I was concerned with in a new light. I concluded it would be absolutely impossible to live at such a distance as Jamaica, for a term of four or five years, and therefore determined, at all events, that I would not go. I could not bear either to acquaint my father with the true reason, or to invent a false one; therefore, without taking any notice to him why I did so, I stayed three weeks, instead of three days, in Kent, till I thought (as it proved) the opportunity would be lost, and the ships sailed. I then returned to London. I had highly displeased my father by this disobedience; but he was more easily reconciled than I could have expected. In a little time I sailed with a friend of his to Venice. In this voyage I was exposed to the company and ill example of the common sailors, among whom I ranked. Im-

portunity and opportunity presenting every day, I once more began to relax from the sobriety and order which I had observed, in some degree, for more than two years. I was sometimes pierced with sharp convictions; but, though I made a few faint efforts to stop, I never recovered from this declension, as I had done from several before. I did not, indeed, as yet, turn out profligate; but I was making large strides towards a total apostasy from God. The most remarkable check and alarm I received (and, for what I know, the last) was by a dream, which made a very strong, though not an abiding, impression upon my mind.

The consideration of whom I am writing to renders it needless for me, either to enter upon a discussion of the nature of dreams in general, or to make an apology for recording my own. Those who acknowledge Scripture will allow that there have been monitory and supernatural dreams, evident communications from heaven, either directing or foretelling future events; and those who are acquainted with the history and experience of the people of God are well assured that such intimations have not been totally withheld in any period down to the present times. (Job xxiii. 15–18.) For my own part I can say, without scruple, "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

I am sure I dreamed to the following effect, and I cannot doubt, from what I have seen since, that it had a direct and easy application to my own

circumstances, to the dangers in which I was about to plunge myself, and to the unmerited deliverance and mercy which God would be pleased to offer me in the time of my distress.

Though I have written out a relation of this dream more than once for others, it has happened that I never reserved a copy; but the principal incidents are so deeply engraven in my memory, that, I believe, I am not liable to any considerable variations in repeating the account.

The scene presented to my imagination was the harbour of *Venice*, where we had lately been. I thought it was night, and my watch upon the deck; and that, as I was walking to and fro by myself, a person came to me (I do not remember whence), and brought me a ring, with an express charge to keep it carefully; assuring me that while I preserved that ring I should be happy and successful; but if I lost or parted with it, I must expect nothing but trouble and misery. I accepted the present and the terms willingly, not in the least doubting my own care to preserve it, and highly satisfied to have my happiness in my own keeping. I was engaged in these thoughts, when a second person came to me, and observing the ring on my finger, took occasion to ask me some questions concerning it. I readily told him its virtues, and his answer expressed a surprise at my weakness in expecting such effects from a ring. I think he reasoned with me some time upon the impossibility of the thing, and at length

urged me, in direct terms, to throw it away. At first I was shocked at the proposal, but his insinuations prevailed. I began to reason and doubt myself, and at last plucked it off my finger, and dropped it over the ship's side into the water, which it had no sooner touched than I saw, the same instant, a terrible fire burst out from a range of the mountains (a part of the Alps) which appeared at some distance behind the city of Venice. I saw the hills as distinctly as if awake, and they were all in flames. Too late I perceived my folly; and my tempter, with an air of insult, informed me, that all the mercy God had in reserve for me was comprised in that ring, which I had wilfully thrown away. I understood that I must now go with him to the burning mountains, and that all the flames I saw were kindled upon my account. I trembled, and was in a great agony; so that it was surprising I did not then awake: but my dream continued, and when I thought myself upon the point of a constrained departure, and stood self-condemned, without plea or hope; suddenly, either a third person, or the same who brought the ring at first (I am not certain which) came to me, and demanded the cause of my grief. I told him the plain case, confessing that I had ruined myself wilfully, and deserved no pity. He blamed my rashness, and asked if I should be wiser, supposing I had my ring again. I could hardly answer to this; for I thought it was gone beyond recall. I believe, indeed, I had not time

to answer, before I saw this unexpected friend go down under the water, just in the spot where I had dropped it, and he soon returned, bringing the ring with him, The moment he came on board, the flames in the mountain were extinguished, and my seducer left me. My fears were at an end, and with joy and gratitude I approached my kind deliverer to receive the ring again; but he refused to return it, and spoke to this effect: "If you should be entrusted with this ring again, you would very soon bring yourself into the same distress; you are not able to keep it; but I will preserve it for you, and, whenever it is needful, will produce it in your behalf."

Upon this I awoke, in a state of mind not to be described; I could hardly eat, or sleep, or transact my necessary business for two or three days; but the impression soon wore off, and in a little time I totally forgot it, and I think it hardly occurred to my mind again till several years afterwards.

It will appear, in the course of these papers, that a time came when I found myself in circumstances very nearly resembling those suggested by this extraordinary dream, when I stood helpless and hopeless upon the brink of an awful eternity; and I doubt not but, had the eyes of my mind been then opened, I should have seen my grand enemy—who had seduced me wilfully to renounce and cast away my religious profession, and to involve myself in the most complicated

crimes—pleased with my agonies, and waiting for a permission to seize and bear away my soul to this place of torment. I should perhaps have likewise seen that Jesus, whom I had persecuted and defied, rebuking the adversary, claiming me for His own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, and saying, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."

However, though I saw not these things, I found the benefit; I obtained mercy. The Lord answered for me in the day of my distress; and, blessed be His name, He who restored the ring (or what was signified by it) vouchsafes to keep it. Oh, what an unspeakable comfort is this, that I am not in mine own keeping! (1 Peter i. 1–5.) "The Lord is my Shepherd." I have been enabled to trust my all in His hands, and I know in whom I have believed. Satan still desires to have me, that he might sift me as wheat; but my Saviour has prayed for me, that my faith may not fail. Here is my security and power, a bulwark against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. But for this, many a time and often (if possible) I should have ruined myself, since my first deliverance, nay, I should fall, and stumble, and perish still, after all that the Lord has done for me, if His faithfulness were not engaged in my behalf, to be my sun and shield, even unto death. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Nothing very remarkable occurred in the following part of that voyage. I returned home in

December, 1743, and soon after repeated my visit to Kent, where I protracted my stay in the same imprudent manner as I had done before, which again disappointed my father's designs in my favour, and almost provoked him to disown me. Before anything suitable offered again, I was taken by an impress gang (owing entirely to my own thoughtless conduct), and put on board a tender. It was at a critical juncture, when the French fleets were hovering upon our coast, so that my father was not able to procure my release. In a few days I was sent on board the *Harwich* man-of-war, at the Nore. I entered here upon quite a new scene of life, and endured much hardship for about a month. My father was then willing that I should remain in the navy, as a war was daily expected, and procured me a recommendation to the captain, who took me upon the quarter-deck as a midshipman.

I had now an easy life, as to externals, and might have gained respect; but my mind was unsettled, and my behaviour very indifferent. I here met with companions who completed the ruin of my principles; and though I affected to talk of virtue, and was not so outwardly abandoned as afterwards, yet my delight and habitual practice was wickedness. My chief intimate was a person of exceedingly good natural talents, and much observation. He was the greatest master of what is called the freethinking scheme I remember to have met with; and he knew how

to insinuate his sentiments in the most plausible way. His zeal also was equal to his address; he could hardly have laboured more in the cause if he had expected to gain heaven by it.

Allow me to add, while I think of it, that this man, whom I honoured as my master, and whose practice I adopted so eagerly, perished in the same way as I expected to have done. I have been told that he was overtaken, in a voyage from Lisbon, with a violent storm. The vessel and people escaped, but a great sea broke on board, and swept him into eternity. Thus the Lord spares or punishes, according to His sovereign pleasure.

But to return. I was fond of his company, and having myself a smattering of books, was eager enough to show my reading. He soon perceived my case, that I had not wholly broke through the restraints of conscience, and therefore did not shock me at first with too broad intimations of his design; he rather, as I thought, spoke favourably of religion. But when he had gained my confidence, he began to speak plainer; and perceiving my ignorant attachment to the *Characteristics*, he joined issue with me upon that book, and convinced me that I had never understood it. In a word, he so plied me with objections and arguments that my depraved heart was soon gained, and I entered into his plan with all my spirit. Thus, like an unwary sailor, who quits his port just before a rising storm, I renounced

the hopes and comforts of the gospel at the very time when every other comfort was about to fail me.

In December, 1744, the *Harwich* was in the Downs, bound to the East Indies. The captain gave me liberty to go on shore for a day; but, without consulting prudence, or regarding consequences, I took horse, and following the dictates of my restless passion, I went to take a last leave of her I loved. I had little satisfaction in the interview, as I was sensible that I was taking pains to multiply my own troubles. The short time I could stay passed like a dream, and on New-year's Day, 1745, I took my leave to return to the ship. The captain was prevailed on to excuse my absence, but this rash step (especially as it was not the first liberty of the kind I had taken) highly displeased him, and lost me his favour, which I never recovered.

At length we sailed from Spithead with a very large fleet. We put into Torbay with a change of wind; but, it returning fair again, we sailed the next day. Several of our fleet were lost in attempting to leave that place; but the following night the whole fleet was greatly endangered upon the coast of Cornwall, by a storm from the southward. The darkness of the night, and the number of the vessels, occasioned much confusion and damage. Our ship, though several times in imminent danger of being run down by other vessels, escaped unhurt; but many suffered much,

particularly the *Admiral*. This occasioned our putting back to Plymouth.

While we lay at Plymouth I heard that my father, who had interest in some of the ships lately lost, was come down to Torbay. He had a connection at that time with the African Company. I thought if I could get to him he might easily introduce me into that service, which would be better than pursuing a long uncertain voyage to the East Indies. It was a maxim with me, in those unhappy days, never to deliberate: the thought hardly occurred to me, but I was resolved I would leave the ship at all events. I did so, and in the worst manner possible. I was sent one day in the boat, to take care that none of the people deserted; but I betrayed my trust, and went off myself. I knew not what road to take, and durst not ask, for fear of being suspected; yet having some general idea of the country, I guessed right, and, when I had travelled some miles, I found, upon enquiry, that I was on the road to Dartmouth. All went smoothly that day, and part of the next; I walked apace, and expected to have been with my father in about two hours, when I was met by a small party of soldiers. I could not avoid or deceive them. They brought me back to Plymouth. I walked through the streets guarded like a felon. My heart was full of indignation, shame, and fear. I was confined two days in the guard-house, then sent on board my ship, kept awhile in irons, then publicly

stripped and whipped, after which I was degraded from my office, and all my former companions forbidden to show me the least favour, or even to speak to me. As midshipman, I had been entitled to some command, which (being sufficiently haughty and vain) I had not been backward to exert. I was now in my turn brought down to a level with the lowest, and exposed to the insults of all.

And as my present situation was uncomfortable, my future prospects were still worse. The evils I suffered were likely to grow heavier every day. While my catastrophe was recent, the officers and my former friends were somewhat disposed to screen me from ill usage; but during the little time I remained with them afterwards, I found them cool very fast in their endeavours to protect me. Indeed they could not avoid it, without running a great risk of sharing with me; for the captain, though in general a humane man, who behaved very well to the ship's company, was almost implacable in his resentment, when he had been greatly offended, and took several occasions to show himself so to me, and the voyage was expected to be (as it proved) for five years. Yet I think nothing I either felt or feared distressed me so much as to see myself thus forcibly torn away from the object of my affections, under a great improbability of seeing her again, and a much greater of returning in such a manner as would give me hopes of seeing her

mine. Thus I was as miserable on all hands as could well be imagined. My breast was filled with the most excruciating passions—eager desire, bitter rage, and black despair. Every hour exposed me to some new insult and hardship, with no hope of relief or mitigation, no friend to take my part, or to listen to my complaint. Whether I looked inward or outward, I could perceive nothing but darkness and misery. I think no case, except that of a conscience wounded by the wrath of God, could be more dreadful than mine. I cannot express with what wishfulness and regret I cast my last looks upon the English shore. I kept my eyes fixed upon it till, the ship's distance increasing, it insensibly disappeared; and when I could see it no longer, I was tempted to throw myself into the sea, which (according to the wicked system I had adopted) would put a end to all my sorrows at once. But the secret hand of God restrained me. Help me to praise Him, dear sir, for His wonderful goodness to the most unworthy of all His creatures.

I am,
Your most obliged Servant.

LETTER IV.

Dear Sir,—Though I desired your instructions as to the manner and extent of these memoirs, I began to write before I received them, and had almost finished the preceding sheet when your favour of the 11th came to hand. I shall find another occasion to acknowledge my sense of your kind expressions of friendship, which I pray the Lord I may never give you cause to repent of or withdraw. At present I shall confine myself to what more particularly relates to the task assigned me. I shall obey you, sir, in taking notice of the little incidents you recall to my memory, and of others of the like nature, which, without your direction, I should have thought too trivial, and too much my own to deserve mentioning. When I began the eight letters, I intended to say no more of myself than might be necessary to illustrate the wonders of divine providence and grace in the leading turns of my life; but I account your judgment a sufficient warrant for enlarging my plan.

Amongst other things, you desired a more explicit account of the state and progress of my "courtship," as it is usually phrased. This was the point in which I thought it especially became me to be very brief. But I submit to you; and this seems a proper place to resume it, by telling

you how it stood at the time of my leaving England. When my inclinations first discovered themselves, both parties were so young, that no one but myself considered it in a serious view. It served for tea-table talk amongst our friends, and nothing farther was expected from it. But afterwards, when my passion seemed to have abiding effects, so that in an interval of two years it was not at all abated, and especially as it occasioned me to act without any regard to prudence or interest, or my father's designs, and as there was a coolness between him and the family, her parents began to consider it as a matter of consequence; and when I took my last leave of them, her mother, at the same time she expressed the most tender affection for me, as if I had been her own child, told me, that though she had no objections to make, upon a supposition that, at a maturer age, there should be a probability of our engaging upon a prudent prospect, yet as things then stood, she thought herself obliged to interfere; and therefore desired I would no more think of returning to their house (unless her daughter was from home) till such time, as I could either prevail with myself entirely to give up my pretensions, or could assure her that I had my father's express consent to go on. Much depended on Miss ——'s part in this affair. It was something difficult; but though she was young, gay, and quite unpractised in such matters, she was directed to a happy medium.

A positive encouragement, or an absolute refusal, would have been attended with equal, though different, disadvantages. But without much studying about it, I found her always upon her guard. She had penetration to see her absolute power over me, and prudence to make a proper use of it; she would neither understand my hints, nor give me room to come to a direct explanation. She has said since, that from the first discovery of my regard, and long before the thought was agreeable to her, she often had an unaccountable impression upon her mind, that sooner or later she should be mine. Upon these terms we parted.

I now return to my voyage. During our passage to Madeira, I was a prey to the most gloomy thoughts. Though I had well deserved all I met with, and the captain might have been justified if he had carried his resentment still farther, yet my pride at that time suggested that I had been grossly injured, and this so far wrought upon my wicked heart, that I actually formed designs against his life, and this was one reason that made me willing to prolong my own. I was sometimes divided between the two, not thinking it practicable to effect both.

The Lord had now to appearance given me up to judicial hardness; I was capable of anything. I had not the least fear of God before my eyes, nor (so far as I remember) the least sensibility of conscience. I was possessed of so strong a spirit of delusion that I believed my own lie, and

was firmly persuaded that after death I should cease to be. Yet the Lord preserved me. Some intervals of sober reflection would at times take place. When I have chosen death rather than life, a ray of hope would come in, though there was little probability for such a hope) that I should yet see better days, that I might again return to England, and have my wishes crowned, if I did not wilfully throw myself away. In a word, my love to Miss —— was now the only restraint I had left. Though I neither feared God, nor regarded men, I could not bear that *she* should think meanly of me when I was dead. As in the outward concerns of life, the weakest means are often employed by divine providence to produce great effects, beyond their common influence (as when a disease, for instance, has been removed by a fright), so I found it then. This single thought, which had not restrained me from a thousand smaller evils, proved my only and effectual barrier against the greatest and most fatal temptations. How long I could have supported this conflict, or what, humanly speaking, would have been the consequence of my continuing in that situation, I cannot say; but the Lord, whom I little thought of, knew my danger, and was providing for my deliverance.

Two things I had determined when at Plymouth, that I would *not* go to India, and that I *would* go to Guinea; and such indeed was the Lord's will concerning me; but they were to be accomplished

in His way, not in my own. We had been now at Madeira some time; the business of the fleet was completed, and we were to sail the following day. On that memorable morning I was late in bed, and had slept longer, but that one of the midshipmen (an old companion) came down, and, between jest and earnest, bid me rise; and as I did not immediately comply, he cut down the hammock or bed in which I lay, which forced me to dress myself. I was very angry, but durst not resent it. I was little aware how much his caprice affected me, and that this person, who had no design in what he did, was the messenger of God's providence.

I said little, but went upon deck, where I that moment saw a man putting his clothes into a boat, who told me he was going to leave us. Upon inquiring, I was informed that two men from a Guinea ship, which lay near us, had entered on board the *Harwich*, and that the commodore (Sir George Pocock) had ordered the captain to send two others in their room. My heart instantly burned like fire. I begged the boat might be detained a few minutes. I ran to the lieutenants, and entreated them to intercede with the captain that I might be dismissed upon this occasion. Though I had been formerly upon ill terms with these officers, and had disobliged them all in their turns, yet they had pitied my case, and were ready to serve me now. The captain, who, when we were at Plymouth, had refused to

exchange me, though at the request of Admiral Medley, was now easily prevailed on. I believe, in little more than half-an-hour from being asleep in my bed, I saw myself discharged, and safe on board another ship.

This was one of the many critical turns of my life, in which the Lord was pleased to display His providence and care, by causing many unexpected circumstances to concur in almost an instant of time. These sudden opportunities were several times repeated; each of them brought me into an entirely new scene of action; and they were usually delayed to almost the last moment in which they could have taken place.

The ship I went on board was bound for Sierra Leone, and the adjacent parts of what is called the Windward Coast of Africa. The commander, I found, was acquainted with my father. He received me very kindly, and made fair professions of assistance; and, I believe, he would have been my friend; but, without making the least advantage of former mistakes and troubles, I pursued the same course; nay, if possible, I acted much worse. On board the *Harwich*, though my principles were totally corrupted, yet, as upon my first going there I was in some degree staid and serious, the remembrance of this made me ashamed of breaking out in that notorious manner I could otherwise have indulged. But now entering amongst strangers, I could appear without disguise; and I well remember, that while I was

passing from the one ship to the other, this was one reason why I rejoiced in the exchange, and one reflection I made upon the occasion; namely, "That I now might be as abandoned as I pleased, without any control"; and, from this time, I was exceedingly vile indeed, little, if anything, short of that animated description of an almost irrecoverable state, which we have in 2 Peter ii. 14. I not only sinned with a high hand myself, but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion; nay, I eagerly sought occasion, sometimes at my own hazard.

One natural consequence of this carriage was, a loss of the favour of my new captain; not that he was at all religious, or disliked my wickedness, any further than it affected his interest. But I became careless and disobedient; I did not please him, because I did not intend it; and as he was a man of an odd temper likewise, we the more easily disagreed. Besides, I had a little of that unlucky wit, which can do little more than multiply troubles and enemies to its possessor; and, upon some imagined affront, I made a song, in which I ridiculed his ship, his designs, and his person, and soon taught it to the whole ship's company.

Such was the ungrateful return I made for his offers of friendship and protection. I had mentioned no names, but the allusion was plain, and he was no stranger either to the intention or the author.

I shall say no more of this part of my story; let it be buried in eternal silence. But let me not be silent from the praise of that grace which could pardon, that blood which could expiate, such sins as mine; since I, who was the willing slave of every evil, have been spared, and saved, and changed, to stand as a monument of His almighty power for ever.

Thus I went on for about six months, by which time the ship was preparing to leave the coast. A few days before she sailed the captain died. I was not upon much better terms with his mate, who now succeeded to the command, and had, upon some occasion, treated me ill. I made no doubt, but if I went with him to the West Indies, he would put me on board a man-of-war; and this, from what I had known already, was more dreadful to me than death. To avoid it, I determined to remain in Africa, and amused myself with many golden dreams, that here I should find an opportunity of improving my fortune.

There are still, upon that part of the coast, a few white men settled (and there were many more at the time I was first there), whose business it was to purchase slaves, etc., in the rivers and country adjacent, and sell them to the ships at an advanced price. One of these, who had first landed in my indigent circumstances, had acquired considerable wealth. He had lately been in England, and was returning in the vessel I was in, of which he owned a quarter part. His

example impressed me with hopes of the same success; and, upon condition of entering into his service, I obtained my discharge. I had not the precaution to make any terms, but trusted to his generosity. I received no compensation for my time on board the ship, but a bill upon the owners in England, which was never paid, for they failed before my return. The day the vessel sailed I landed upon the island of Benanoes, with little more than the clothes upon my back, as if I had escaped shipwreck.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours, etc.

LETTER V.

Dear Sir,—The two following years, of which I am now to give some account, will seem as an absolute blank in a very short life; but as the Lord's hour of grace was not yet come, and I was to have still deeper experience of the dreadful state of the heart of man, when left to itself, I have seen frequent cause since to admire the mercy of the Lord, in banishing me to those distant parts, and almost excluding me from human society, at a time when I was big with mischief, and, like one infected with a pestilence, was capable of spreading a taint wherever I went.

Had my affairs taken a different turn, had I succeeded in my designs, and remained in England, my sad story would probably have been worse.

Worse in myself, indeed, I could have hardly been; but my wickedness would have had greater scope. I might have been very hurtful to others, and multiplied irreparable evils. But the Lord wisely placed me where I could do little harm. The few I had to converse with were too much like myself, and I was soon brought into such abject circumstances, that I was too low to have any influence. I was rather shunned and despised than imitated; there being few, even of the negroes themselves (during the first year of my residence among them), but thought themselves too good to speak to me. I was to all appearance exposed to perish. But the Lord beheld me with mercy. He did not strike me to hell, as I justly deserved; He passed by me when I was in my blood, and bid me live. (Ezek. xvi. 6.) I can only ascribe it to His secret upholding power, that what I suffered in a part of this interval did not bereave me either of my life or senses; yet, as by these sufferings the force of my evil examples and inclinations was lessened, I have reason to account them amongst my mercies.

It may not perhaps be amiss to digress for a few lines, and give you a very brief sketch of the geography of the circuit I was now confined to, especially as I may have frequent occasion to refer to places I shall now mention; for my trade afterwards, when the Lord gave me to see better days, was chiefly to the same places, and with the same persons, where and by whom I had been

considered as upon a level with their meanest slaves.

From Cape de Verd, the most western point of Africa, to Cape Mount, the whole coast is full of rivers. The principal are Gambia, Rio Grande, Sierra Leone, and Sherbro. Of the former, as it is well known, and I was never there, I need say nothing. The Rio Grande (like the Nile) divides into many branches near the sea. On the most northerly, called Cacheo, the Portuguese have a settlement. The most southern branch, known by the name of Rio Nuna, is, or then was, the usual boundary of the white men's trade northward. Sierra Leone is a mountainous peninsula, uninhabited, and, I believe, inaccessible, upon account of the thick woods, excepting those parts which lie near the water. The river is large and navigable. From hence, about twelve leagues to the south-east, are three contiguous islands, called the Benanoes, about twenty miles in circuit. This was about the centre of the white men's residence. Seven leagues farther, the same way, lie the Plantanes, three small islands, two miles distant from the continent at the point, which form one side of the Sherbro. This river is more properly a sound, running within a long island, and receiving the confluence of several large rivers, unknown to song, but far more deeply engraven in my remembrance than the Po or Tiber. The southernmost of these has a very peculiar course, almost parallel to the coast; so that in tracing

it a great many leagues upwards, it will seldom lead one above three miles, and sometimes not more than half a mile from the seashore. Indeed, I know not, but that all these rivers may have communications with each other, and with the sea, in many places which I have not remarked. If you cast your eyes upon a large map of Africa, while you are reading this, you will have a general idea of the country I was in; for though the maps are very incorrect, most of the places I have mentioned are inserted, and in the same order as I have named them.

My new master had formerly resided near Cape Mount, but he now settled at the Plantanes, upon the largest of the three islands. It is a low, sandy island, about two miles in circumference, and almost covered with palm trees. We immediately began to build a house, and to enter upon trade. I had now some desire to retrieve my lost time, and to exert diligence in what was before me; and he was a man with whom I might have lived tolerably well, if he had not been soon influenced against me; but he was much under the direction of a black woman, who lived with him as a wife. She was a person of some consequence in her own country, and he owed his first rise to her interest. This woman (I know not for what reason) was strangely prejudiced against me from the first; and what made it still worse for me, was a severe fit of illness which attacked me very soon, before I had opportunity

to show what I could or would do in his service. I was sick when he sailed in a shallop to Rio Nuna, and he left me in her hands. At first I was taken some care of; but as I did not recover very soon she grew weary, and entirely neglected me. I had sometimes not a little difficulty to procure a draught of cold water, when burning with a fever. My bed was a mat, spread upon a board or chest, and a log of wood my pillow. When my fever left me, and my appetite returned, I would gladly have eaten, but no one gave unto me. She lived in plenty herself, but hardly allowed me sufficient to sustain life, except now and then, when in the highest good-humour, she would send me victuals on her own plate after she had dined; and this (so greatly was my pride humbled) I received with thanks and eagerness, as the most needy beggar does alms. Once, I well remember, I was called to receive this bounty from her own hand; but, being exceedingly weak and feeble, I dropped the plate. Those who live in plenty can hardly conceive how this loss touched me; but she had the cruelty to laugh at my disappointment; and though the table was covered with dishes (for she lived much in the European manner), she refused to give me any more. My distress has been at times so great, as to compel me to go by night and pull up roots in the plantation (though at the risk of being punished as a thief), which I have eaten raw upon the spot, for fear of discovery. The

roots I speak of are very wholesome food, when boiled or roasted, but as unfit to be eaten raw in any quantity as a potato. The consequence of this diet, which after the first experiment I always expected, and seldom missed, was the same as if I had taken tartar emetic; so that I have often returned as empty as I went; yet necessity urged me to repeat the trial several times. I have sometimes been relieved by strangers; nay, even by the slaves in the chain, who have secretly brought me victuals (for they durst not be seen to do it) from their own slender pittance. Next to pressing want, nothing sits harder upon the mind than scorn and contempt and of this likewise I had an abundant measure. When I was very slowly recovering, this woman would sometimes pay me a visit, not to pity or relieve, but to insult me. She would call me worthless and indolent, and compel me to walk, which, when I could hardly do, she would set her attendants to mimic my motion, to clap their hands, laugh, throw limes at me; or, if they chose to throw stones, (as I think was the case once or twice), they were not rebuked; but in general, though all who depended on her favour must join in her treatment, yet, when she was out of sight, I was rather pitied than scorned by the meanest of her slaves.

At length my master returned from his voyage. I complained of ill-usage, but he could not believe me; and as I did it in her hearing, I fared no

better for it. But in his second voyage he took me with him.

We did pretty well for a while, till a brother trader he met in the river persuaded him that I was unfaithful, and stole his goods in the night, or when he was on shore. This was almost the only vice I could not be justly charged with. The only remains of a good education I could boast of, was what is commonly called honesty; and as far as he had entrusted me, I had been always true; and though my great distress might, in some measure, have excused it, I never once thought of defrauding him in the smallest matter. However, the charge was believed, and I condemned without evidence.

From that time he likewise used me very hardly. Whenever he left the vessel I was locked upon deck, with a pint of rice for my day's allowance; and if he stayed longer, I had no relief till his return. Indeed, I believe I should have been nearly starved but for an opportunity of catching fish sometimes. When fowls were killed for his own use I seldom was allowed any part but the entrails, to bait my hooks with; and, at what we call slack water, that is, about the changing of the tides, when the current was still, I used generally to fish (for at other times it was not practicable), and I very often succeeded. If I saw a fish upon my hook, my joy was little less than any other person may have found in the accomplishment of the scheme he had most at heart.

Such a fish, hastily broiled, or rather half burnt, without sauce, salt, or bread, has afforded me a delicious meal. If I caught none, I might, if I could, sleep away my hunger till the next return of slack water, and then try again. Nor did I suffer less from the inclemency of the weather, and the want of clothes. The rainy season was now advancing: my whole suit was a shirt, a pair of trousers, a cotton handkerchief instead of a cap, and a cotton cloth about two yards long, to supply the want of upper garments; and thus accoutred, I have been exposed for twenty, thirty, perhaps near forty hours together, in incessant rains, accompanied with strong gales of wind, without the least shelter, when my master was on shore. I feel to this day some faint returns of the violent pains I then contracted. The excessive cold and wet I endured in that voyage, and so soon after I had recovered from a long sickness, quite broke my constitution and my spirits. The latter were soon restored, but the effects of the former still remain with me, as a needful memento of the service and the wages of sin.

In about two months we returned, and then the rest of the time I remained with him was chiefly spent at the Plantanes, under the same regimen as I have already mentioned. My haughty heart was now brought down, not to a wholesome repentance, not to the language of the prodigal—this was far from me; but my spirits were sunk; I lost all resolution, and almost all reflection. I had

lost the fierceness which fired me when on board the *Harwich*, and which made me capable of the most desperate attempts; but I was no further changed than a tiger, tamed by hunger: remove the occasion, and he will be as wild as ever.

One thing, though strange, is most true. Though destitute of food and clothing, depressed to a degree beyond common wretchedness, I could sometimes collect my mind to mathematical studies. I had bought Barrow's *Euclid* at Plymouth; it was the only volume I brought on shore; it was always with me, and I used to take it to remote corners of the island by the sea-side, and draw my diagrams with a long stick upon the sand. Thus I often beguiled my sorrows, and almost forgot my feeling—and thus, without any other assistance, I made myself, in a good measure, master of the first six books of Euclid.

I am yours,

Dear Sir, etc.

LETTER VI.

Dear Sir,—There is much piety in the grateful acknowledgment of Jacob. "With my staff I passed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." They are words which ought to affect me with a peculiar emotion. I remember that some of those mournful days, to which my last

letter refers, I was busied in planting some lime or lemon trees. The plants I put in the ground were no longer than a young gooseberry bush. My master and his mistress, passing by the place, stopped awhile to look at me. At last, "Who knows," says he, "but by the time these trees grow up and bear, you may go home to England, obtain the command of a ship, and return to reap the fruit of your labours? We see strange things sometimes happen."

This, as he intended it, was a cutting sarcasm. I believe he thought it quite as probable that I should live to be king of Poland; yet it proved a prediction, and they (one of them at least) lived to see me return from England in the capacity he had mentioned, and pluck some of the first limes from those very trees.

How can I proceed in my relation, till I raise a monument to the divine goodness, by comparing the circumstances in which the Lord has since placed me, with what I was at that time? Had you seen me, sir, then go so pensive and solitary in the dead of night to wash my one shirt upon the rocks, and afterwards put it on wet, that it might dry upon my back while I slept; had you seen me so poor a figure that, when a ship's boat came to the island, shame often constrained me to hide myself in the woods from the sight of strangers; especially, had you known that my conduct, principles, and heart were still darker than my outward condition, how little would you

have imagined, that one who so fully answered to the "hateful and hating one another" of the apostle was reserved to be so peculiar an instance of the providential care and goodness of God. There was, at that time, but one earnest desire in my heart which was not contrary and shocking, both to religion and reason; that one desire, though my vile, licentious life rendered me peculiarly unworthy of success, and though a thousand difficulties seemed to render it impossible, the Lord was pleased to gratify. But this favour, though great, and greatly prized, was a small thing compared to the blessings of His grace; He spared me to give me "the knowledge of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ." In love to my soul, He delivered me from the pit of corruption, and cast all my aggravated sins behind His back. (Isaiah xxxviii. 17.) He brought my feet into the paths of peace.

This is indeed the chief article, but it is not the whole. When He made me acceptable to Himself in the Beloved, He gave me favour in the sight of others. He raised me new friends, protected and guided me through a long series of dangers, and crowned every day with repeated mercies. To Him I owe it that I am still alive, and that I am not still living in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and the want of all things: into that state I brought myself, but it was He who delivered me. He has given me an easy situation in life, some experimental know-

ledge of His gospel, a large acquaintance amongst His people, a friendship and correspondence with several of His most honoured servants.

But it is as difficult to enumerate my present advantages, as it is fully to describe the evils and miseries of the preceding contrast.

I know not exactly how long things continued with me thus, but I believe near a twelvemonth. In this interval I wrote two or three times to my father; I gave him an account of my condition, and desired his assistance; intimating at the same time, that I had resolved not to return to England, unless he was pleased to send for me. I have likewise letters by me written to Miss —— in that dismal period; so that, at the lowest ebb, it seems I still retained a hope of seeing her again. My father applied to his friend in Liverpool, of whom I have spoken before, who gave orders accordingly to a captain of his, who was then fitting out for Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Some time within the year, as I have said, I obtained my master's consent to live with another trader who dwelt upon the same island. Without his consent I could not be taken, and he was unwilling to do it sooner, but it was then brought about. This was an alteration much to my advantage. I was soon decently clothed, lived in plenty, was considered as a companion, and trusted with the care of all his domestic effects, which were to the amount of some thousands of pounds. This man had several factories, and white servants in

different places, particularly one in Kittam, the river I spoke of, which runs near along the sea coast. I was soon appointed to go there, where I had a share in the management of business, jointly with another of his servants. We lived as we pleased, business flourished, and our employer was satisfied. Here I began to be wretch enough to think myself happy. There is a significant phrase frequently used in those parts, that such a white man is grown "black." It does not imply an alteration of complexion, but disposition. I have known several, who, settling in Africa after the age of thirty or forty, have, at that time of life, been gradually assimilated to the tempers, customs, and ceremonies of the natives, so far as to prefer that country to England. They have even become dupes to all the pretended charms, necromancies, amulets, and divinations of the blinded negroes, and put more trust in such things than the wiser sort among the natives. A part of this spirit of infatuation was growing upon me; in time, perhaps, I might have yielded to the whole. I entered into closer engagements with the inhabitants, and should have lived and died a wretch amongst them, if the Lord had not watched over me for good. Not that I had lost those ideas which chiefly engaged my heart to England, but despair of seeing them accomplished made me willing to remain where I was. I thought I could more easily bear the disappointment in this situation than nearer home. But so soon as

I had fixed my connections and plans with these views, the Lord providentially interposed to break them in pieces, and save me from ruin in spite of myself.

In the meantime the ship that had orders to bring me home arrived at Sierra Leone. The captain made inquiry for me there and at the Bonanas; but understanding that I was at a great distance in the country, he thought no more about me. Without doubt the hand of God directed my being placed at Kittam just at this time; for, as the ship came no nearer than the Bonanas, and stayed but a few days, if I had been at the Plantanes, I could not perhaps have heard of her till she had sailed. The same must have certainly been the event, had I been sent to any other factory, of which my new master had several upon different rivers. But though the place I was at was a long way up a river, much more than a hundred miles distant from the Plantanes, yet, by the peculiar situation which I have already noticed, I was still within a mile of the sea-coast. To make the interposition more remarkable, I was, at that very juncture going in quest of trade to a place at some distance directly from the sea, and should have set out a day or two before, but that we waited for a few articles from the next ship that offered, to complete the assortment of goods I was to take with me. We used sometimes to walk to the beach, in expectation of seeing a vessel pass by; but this was very precarious,

as at that time the place was not at all resorted to by ships for trade. Many passed in the night, others kept at a considerable distance from the shore. In a word, I do not know that any one had stopped while I was there, though some had before, upon observing a signal made from the shore. In February, 1747 (I know not the exact day), my fellow-servant, walking down to the beach in the forenoon, saw a vessel sailing past, and made a smoke in token of trade. She was already a little beyond the place, and, as the wind was fair, the captain was in some demur whether to stop or not. However, had my companion been half-an-hour later, she would have been gone beyond recall; but he soon saw her come to an anchor, and went on board in a canoe; and this proved the very ship I have spoken of. One of the first questions he was asked was concerning me, and when the captain understood I was so near, he came on shore to deliver his message. Had an invitation from home reached me when I was sick and starving at the Plantanes, I should have received it as life from the dead; but now, for the reasons already given, I heard it at first with indifference. The captain, unwilling to lose me, told a story altogether of his own framing. He gave me a very plausible account, how he had missed a large packet of letters and papers, which he should have brought with him; but this, he said, he was sure of, having had it from my father's own mouth, as well as

from his employer, that a person, lately dead, had left me £400 per annum, adding further, that if I was in any way embarrassed in my circumstances, he had express orders to redeem me, though it should cost one half of his cargo.

Every particular of this was false; nor could I myself believe what he said about the estate; but, as I had some expectations from an aged relation, I thought a part of it might be true. But I was not long in suspense; for though my father's care and desire to see me had too little weight with me, and would have been insufficient to make me quit my retreat, yet the remembrance of Miss ——, the hopes of seeing her, and the possibility that accepting this offer might once more put me in a way of gaining her hand, prevailed over all other considerations. The captain further promised (and in this he kept his word) that I should lodge in his cabin, dine at his table, and be his constant companion, without expecting any service from me. And thus I was suddenly freed from a captivity of about fifteen months. I had neither a thought nor a desire of this change one hour before it took place. I embarked with him, and in a few hours lost sight of Kittam.

How much is their blindness to be pitied, who can see nothing but chance in events of this sort! So blind and stupid was I at that time, I made no reflection. I sought no direction in what had happened. Like a wave of the sea, driven with

the wind and tossed, I was governed by present appearances, and looked no farther. But He, who is eyes to the blind, was leading me in a way that I knew not.

Now I am in some measure enlightened, I can easily perceive that it is in the adjustment and concurrence of these unexpected circumstances, that the ruling power and wisdom of God is most evidently displayed in human affairs. How many such casual events may we remark in the history of Joseph, which had each a necessary influence in his ensuing promotion. If he had not dreamed, or if he had not told his dream; if the Midianites had passed by a day sooner, or a day later; if they had sold him to any person but Potiphar; if his mistress had been a better woman; if Pharaoh's officers had not displeased their lord; or if any or all these things had fallen out in any other manner or time than they did, all that followed had been prevented. The promises and purposes of God concerning Israel, their bondage, deliverances, polity, and settlement must have failed; and, as all these things tended to and centred in CHRIST, the promised Saviour, the Desire of all nations would not have appeared; mankind had been still in their sins, without hope; and the counsels of God's eternal love, in favour of sinners, defeated.

Thus we may see a connection between Joseph's first dream and the death of the Lord Jesus, with all its glorious consequences. So strong,

though secret, are the links between the greatest and the smallest events. What a comfortable thought is this to a believer, to know, that amidst all the various interfering designs of men, the Lord has one constant design, which He cannot, will not, miss, namely, His own glory in the complete salvation of His people; and that He is wise, and strong, and faithful to make even those things which seem contrary to this design, subservient to promote it.

You have allowed me to comment upon my own text, yet the length of this observation may need some apology.

Believe me to be, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged Servant.

LETTER VII.

Dear Sir,—The ship I was now on board, as a passenger, was on a trading voyage for gold, ivory, dyers'-wood, and beeswax. It requires much longer time to collect a cargo of this sort than of slaves. The captain began his trade at Gambia, had been already four or five months in Africa, and continued there a year, or thereabouts, after I was with him; in which time we ranged the whole coast, as far as Cape Lopez, which lies about a degree south of the equinoctial, and more than a thousand miles farther from

England than the place where I embarked. I have little to offer worthy your notice in the course of this tedious voyage. I had no business to employ my thoughts, but sometimes amused myself with mathematics. Excepting this, my whole life, when awake, was a course of most horrid impiety and profaneness. I know not that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer. Not content with common oaths and imprecations, I daily invented new ones; so that I was often seriously reproved by the captain, who was himself a very passionate man, and not at all circumspect in his expressions. From the relation I at times made him of my past adventures, and what he saw of my conduct, and especially towards the close of the voyage, when we met with many disasters, he would often tell me that, to his great grief, he had a Jonah on board; that a curse attended me wherever I went; and that all the troubles he met with in the voyage were owing to his having taken me into the vessel. I shall omit any further particulars, and after mentioning an instance or two of the Lord's mercy to me, while I was thus defying His power and patience, I shall proceed to something more worthy your perusal.

Although I lived long in the excess of almost every other extravagance, I never was fond of drinking; and my father has often been heard to say, that while I avoided drunkenness he should still entertain hopes of my recovery. But some-

times I would promote a drinking-bout, for a "frolic's sake," as I termed it; for though I did not love the liquor, I was sold to do iniquity, and delighted in mischief. The last abominable frolic of this sort I engaged in was in the river Gabon. The proposal and expense were my own. Four or five of us one evening sat down upon deck, to see who could hold out longest in drinking geneva and rum alternately. A large sea-shell supplied the place of a glass.

I was very unfit for a challenge of this sort; for my head was always incapable of bearing much strong drink. However, I began, and proposed the first toast, which, I well remember, was some imprecation against the person who should start first. This proved to be myself. My brain was soon fired. I arose and danced about the deck like a madman, and while I was thus diverting my companions my hat went overboard. By the light of the moon I saw the ship's boat, and eagerly threw myself over the side to get into her, that I might recover my hat. My sight in that circumstance deceived me; for the boat was not within my reach, as I thought, but perhaps twenty feet from the ship's side. I was, however, half overboard, and should, in one moment more, have plunged myself into the water, when somebody caught hold of my clothes behind, and pulled me back. This was an amazing escape, for I could not swim if I had been sober. The tide ran very strong, my companions were too

much intoxicated to save me, and the rest of the ship's company were asleep. So near I was, to appearance, of perishing in that dreadful condition, and sinking into eternity under the weight of my own curse.

Another time, at Cape Lopez, some of us had been in the woods, and shot a buffalo, or wild cow. We brought a part of it on board, and carefully marked the place (as I thought) where we left the remainder. In the evening we returned to fetch it, but we set out too late. I undertook to be their guide, but night coming on before we could reach the place we lost our way. Sometimes we were in swamps up to the middle in water, and when we recovered dry land we could not tell whether we were walking towards the ship or wandering farther from her. Every step increased our uncertainty. The night grew darker, and we were entangled in inextricable woods, where perhaps the foot of man had never trod before. That part of the country is entirely abandoned to wild beasts, with which it prodigiously abounds. We were indeed in a terrible case, having neither light, food, or arms, and expecting a tiger to rush from behind every tree. The stars were clouded, and we had no compass to form a judgment which way we were going. Had things continued thus we had probably perished; but it pleased God no beast came near us, and after some hours' perplexity the moon arose, and pointed out the eastern quarter. It appeared then, as we

had expected, that instead of drawing nearer to the sea-side we had been penetrating into the country; but, by the guidance of the moon, we at length came to the waterside, a considerable distance from the ship. We got safe on board, without any other inconvenience than what we suffered from fear and fatigue.

Those and many other deliverances were all at that time entirely lost upon me. The admonitions of conscience, which from successive repulses had grown weaker and weaker, at length entirely ceased; and for a space of many months, if not for some years, I cannot recollect that I had a single check of that sort. At times I have been visited with sickness, and have believed myself near to death; but I had not the least concern about the consequences. In a word, I seemed to have every mark of final impenitence and rejection—neither judgments nor mercies made the least impression on me.

At length, our business finished, we left Cape Lopez, and after a few days' stay at the island of Annabona, to lay in provisions, we sailed homewards, about the beginning of January, 1748. From Annabona to England, without touching at any intermediate port, is a very long navigation, perhaps more than seven thousand miles, if we include the circuits necessary to be made on account of the trade winds.

We sailed first westward, till near the coast of Brazil, then northward, to the banks of New-

foundland, with the usual variations of wind and weather, and without meeting anything extraordinary. On these banks we stopped half a day to fish for cod. This was then chiefly for diversion; we had provisions enough, and little expected those fish (as it afterwards proved) would be all we should have to subsist on. We left the banks March 1st, with a westerly gale of wind, which pushed us fast homewards.

I should here observe, that with the length of this voyage, in a hot climate, the vessel was greatly out of repair, and very unfit to support stormy weather. The sails and cordage were likewise very much worn out, and many such circumstances concurred to render what followed more dangerous. I think it was on the ninth of March, the day before our catastrophe, that I felt a thought pass through my mind which I had long been a stranger to. Among the few books we had on board, one was Stanhope's *Thomas à Kempis*. I carelessly took it up, as I had often done before, to pass away the time; but I had still read it with the same indifference, as if it were entirely a romance. However, while I was reading this time, an involuntary suggestion arose in my mind, What if these things should be true?

I could not bear the force of the inference, as it related to myself, and therefore shut the book presently. My conscience witnessed against me once more, and I concluded that, true or false, I

must abide the consequences of my own choice. I put an abrupt end to these reflections by joining in with some vain conversation or other that came in my way.

But now *the Lord's time was come*, and the conviction I was so unwilling to receive was deeply impressed upon me by an awful incident. I went to bed that night in my usual security and indifference, but was awaked from a sound sleep by the force of a violent sea, which broke on board us. So much of it came down below as filled the cabin I lay in with water. This alarm was followed by a cry from the deck, that the ship was going down or sinking. As soon as I could recover myself I essayed to go upon deck, but was met upon the ladder by the captain, who desired me to bring a knife with me. While I returned for the knife another person went up in my place, and was instantly washed overboard. We had no leisure to lament him, nor did we expect to survive him long; for we soon found the ship was filling with water very fast. The sea had torn away the upper timbers on one side, and made a mere wreck in a few minutes.

I shall not affect to describe this disaster in the marine dialect, which would be understood by but few; and, therefore, I can give you only a very inadequate idea of it. Taken in all circumstances, it was astonishing, and almost miraculous, that any of us survived to relate the story. We had immediate recourse to the pumps, but the

water increased against our efforts: some of us were set to *bailing* in another part of the vessel, that is, to lade out the water with buckets and pails. We had but eleven or twelve persons to sustain this service, and notwithstanding all we could do she was full, or very near it; and then, with a common cargo, she must of course have sunk; but we had a great quantity of beeswax and wood on board, which were specifically lighter than the water; and as it pleased God that we received this shock in the very crisis of the gale, towards morning we were enabled to employ some means for our safety, which succeeded beyond hope. In about an hour's time the day began to break, and the wind abated. We expended most of our clothes and bedding to stop the leaks (though the weather was exceeding cold, especially to us, who had so lately left a hot climate). Over these we nailed pieces of boards, and at last perceived the water abate.

At the beginning of this hurry I was little affected. I pumped hard, and endeavoured to animate myself and my companions. I told one of them, that in a few days this distress would serve us to talk of over a glass of wine; but he, being a less hardened sinner than myself, replied with tears, "No, it is too late now."

About nine o'clock, being almost spent with cold and labour, I went to speak with the captain, who was busied elsewhere; and just as I was returning from him I said, almost without any

meaning, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us."

This, though spoken with little reflection, was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for the space of many years. I was instantly struck with my own words, and as Jehu said once, "What hast thou to do with peace?" so it directly occurred, "What mercy can there be for me?"

I was obliged to return to the pump, and there I continued till noon, almost every passing wave breaking over my head; but we made ourselves fast with ropes, that we might not be washed away. Indeed, I expected that every time the vessel descended into the sea she would rise no more; and though I dreaded death *now*, and my heart foreboded the worst, if the Scriptures, which I had long since opposed, were indeed true; yet still I was but half convinced, and remained for a space of time in a sullen frame, a mixture of despair and impatience. I thought, if the Christian religion was true, I could not be forgiven, and was therefore expecting, and almost, at times, wishing to know the worst of it.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

LETTER VIII.

Dear Sir,—The 10th of March is a day much to be remembered by me, and I have never suffered it to pass wholly unnoticed since the year 1748. On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters. I continued at the pump from three in the morning till near noon, and then I could do no more. I went and lay down, uncertain, and almost indifferent, whether I should rise again. In an hour's time I was called, and not being able to pump, I went to the helm, and steered the ship till midnight, excepting a small interval for refreshment. I had here leisure and convenient opportunity for reflection. I began to think of my former religious professions, the extraordinary turns in my life; the calls, warnings, and deliverances I had met with, the licentious course of my conversation, particularly my unparalleled effrontery in making the gospel history (which I could not now be sure was false, though I was not yet assured it was true) the constant subject of profane ridicule. I thought—allowing the Scripture premises—there never was, nor could be, such a sinner as myself, and then comparing the advantages I had broken through, I concluded, at first, that my sins were too great to be forgiven. Scripture likewise seemed to say the same; for I had formerly been well acquainted with the

Bible, and many passages, upon this occasion, returned upon my memory, particularly those awful passages, Prov. i. 24-31, Heb. vi. 4, 6, and 2 Peter ii. 20, which seemed so exactly to suit my case and character as to bring with them a presumptive proof of a divine original.

Thus, as I have said, I waited with fear and impatience to receive my inevitable doom. Yet, though I had thoughts of this kind, they were exceeding faint and disproportionate; it was not till long after (perhaps several years)—till I had gained some clear views of the infinite grace of God through Christ Jesus—that I had a deep and strong apprehension of my state by nature and practice, and perhaps, till then, I could not have borne the sight. So wonderfully does the Lord proportion the discoveries of sin and grace, for He knows our frame, and that, if He were to put forth the greatness of His power, a poor sinner would be instantly overwhelmed, and crushed as a moth.

But to return. When I saw, beyond all probability, there was still hope of respite, and heard, about six in the evening, that the ship was freed from water, there arose a gleam of hope. I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favour. I began to pray. I could not utter the prayer of faith; I could not draw near to God, and call Him Father. My prayer was like the cry of the ravens, which yet the Lord does not disdain to hear. I now began to think of that Jesus whom

I had so often derided; I recollected the particulars of His life, and of His death; a death for sins not His own, but, as I remembered, for the sake of those who, in their distress, should put their trust in Him. And now I chiefly wanted evidence. The comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted, and I rather wished than believed these things were real facts.

You will please to observe, sir, that I collect the strain of the reasonings and exercises of my mind in one view; but I do not say that all this passed at one time. The great question now was, how to obtain faith. I speak not of an appropriating faith (of which I then knew neither the nature nor necessity), but how I should gain an assurance that the Scriptures were of a divine inspiration, and a sufficient warrant for the exercise of trust and hope in God. One of the first helps I received (in consequence of a determination to examine the New Testament more carefully) was from Luke xi. 13. I had been sensible, that to profess faith in Jesus Christ, when in reality I did not believe His history, was no better than a mockery of the heart-searching God; but here I found a Spirit spoken of, which was to be communicated to those who ask it. Upon this I reasoned thus: If this book is true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise. I have need of that very Spirit, by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has promised here to give

that Spirit to those who ask. (Luke xi. 13.) I must therefore pray, and if it is of God, He will make good His own word. My purposes were strengthened by John vii. 17. I concluded from thence, that though I could not say from my heart that I believed the gospel, yet I would, for the present, take it for granted; and that, by studying it in this light, I should be more and more confirmed in it.

If what I am writing could be perused by our modern infidels, they would say (for I too well know their manner) that I was very desirous to persuade myself into this opinion. I confess I was; and so would they be, if the Lord should show them, as He was pleased to show me, at that time, the absolute necessity of some expedient to interpose between a righteous God and a sinful soul. Upon the gospel scheme I saw at least a peradventure of hope; but on every other side I was surrounded with black, unfathomable despair.

The wind was now moderate, but continued fair, and we were still drawing nearer to our port. We began to recover from our consternation, though we were greatly alarmed by our circumstances. We found that the water had floated all our movables in the hold, and all the casks of provision had been beaten to pieces by the violent motion of the ship. On the other hand, our live stock, such as pigs, sheep, and poultry, had been washed overboard in the storm. In effect, all the provisions we saved, except the fish I men-

tioned, and some food of the pulse kind, which used to be given to the hogs (and there was but little of this left), all our other provisions would have given us but scanty allowance for one week. The sails too were mostly blown away, so that we advanced but slowly, even while the wind was fair. We imagined ourselves about a hundred leagues from the land, but in reality it was much farther. Thus we proceeded with an alternate prevalence of hopes and fears. My leisure time was chiefly employed in reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and praying to the Lord for mercy and instruction.

Things continued thus for four or five days, or perhaps longer, till we were awakened one morning by the joyful shouts of the watch upon deck, proclaiming the sight of land. We were all soon raised at the sound. The dawning was uncommonly beautiful, and the light (just strong enough to discover distant objects) presented us with a gladdening prospect. It seemed a mountainous coast about twenty miles from us, terminating in a cape or point, and, a little further, two or three small islands, as just rising out of the water. The appearance and position seemed exactly answerable to our hopes, resembling the north-west extremity of *Ireland*, which we were steering for. We sincerely congratulated each other, making no doubt but that, if the wind continued, we should be in safety and plenty the next day. The small remainder

of our brandy (which was reduced to little more than a pint) was, by the captain's orders, distributed amongst us; he added at the same time, "We shall soon have brandy enough." We likewise ate up the residue of our bread for joy of this welcome sight, and were in the condition of men suddenly reprieved from death.

While we were thus alert, the mate, with a graver tone than the rest, sunk our spirits by saying that "he wished it might prove land at last." If one of the common sailors had first said so, I know not but the rest would have beat him for raising such an unreasonable doubt. It brought on, however, warm debates and disputes whether it was land or no; but the case was soon unanswerably decided, for the day was advancing fast, and, in a little time, one of our fancied islands began to grow red, from the approach of the sun, which soon arose just under it. In a word, we had been prodigal of our bread and brandy too hastily; our land was literally *in nubibus*—nothing but clouds, and in half an hour more the whole appearance was dissipated.

Seamen have often known deceptions of this sort, but in our extremity we were loth to be undeceived. However, we comforted ourselves, that though we could not see the land, yet we should soon, the wind hitherto continuing fair; but, alas! we were deprived of this hope likewise. That very day our fair wind subsided into a calm, and the next morning the gales sprung up from

the south-east directly against us, and continued so for more than a fortnight afterwards. The ship was so wrecked that we were obliged to keep the wind always on the broken side, unless the weather was quite moderate. Thus we were driven, by the wind fixing in that quarter, still further from our port, to the northward of all Ireland, as far as the Lewis or western islands of Scotland, but a long way to the westward. In a word, our station was such as deprived us of any hope of being relieved by other vessels. It may, indeed, be questioned, whether our ship was not the very first that had been in that part of the ocean at the same season of the year.

Provisions now began to grow very short. The half of a salted cod was a day's subsistence for twelve persons. We had plenty of fresh water, but not a drop of stronger liquor; no bread, hardly any clothes, and very cold weather. We had incessant labour with the pumps, to keep the ship above water. Much labour and little food wasted us fast, and one man died under the hardship. Yet our sufferings were light in comparison of our just fears. We could not afford this bare allowance much longer, but had a terrible prospect of being either starved to death, or reduced to feed upon one another. Our expectations grew darker every day, and I had a further trouble peculiar to myself. The captain, whose temper was quite soured by distress, was hourly reproaching me (as I formerly observed) as the sole cause

of the calamity, and was confident that if I was thrown overboard (and not otherwise) they should be preserved from death. He did not intend to make the experiment, but the continual repetition of this in my ears gave me much uneasiness, especially as my conscience seconded his words. I thought it very probable, that all that had befallen us was on my account. I was at last found out by the powerful hand of God, and condemned in my own breast.

However, proceeding in the method I have described, I began to conceive hopes greater than all my fears; especially when, at the time we were ready to give up all for lost, and despair was taking place in every countenance, I saw the wind come about to the very point we wished it, so as best to suit that broken part of the ship which must be kept out of the water, and to blow so gently as our few remaining sails could bear. And thus it continued, without any observable alteration or increase, though at an unsettled time of the year, till we once more were called up to see the land, and were convinced that it was land indeed. We saw the island Tory, and the next day anchored in Lough Swilly, in Ireland. This was the 8th of April, just four weeks after the damage we sustained from the sea. When we came into this port our very last victuals were boiling in the pot, and before we had been there two hours the wind, which seemed to have been providentially restrained till we were in a

place of safety, began to blow with great violence, so that if we had continued at sea that night in our shattered, enfeebled condition we must, in all human appearance, have gone to the bottom.

About this time I began to know that there is a God that hears and answers prayer. How many times has He appeared for me since this great deliverance! Yet, alas! how distrustful and ungrateful is my heart unto this hour.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged

humble Servant.

LETTER IX.

Dear Sir,—I have brought my history down to the time of my arrival in Ireland, 1748; but before I proceed I would look back a little, to give you some further account of the state of my mind, and how far I was helped against inward difficulties, which beset me at the time I had many outward hardships to struggle with. The straits of hunger, cold, weariness, and the fears of sinking and starving, I shared in common with others; but besides these I felt a heart-bitterness which was properly my own, no one on board but myself being impressed with a sense of the hand of God in our danger and deliverance, at least not awakened to any concern

for their souls. No temporal trials can reach the heart, unless the Lord Himself applies them. My companions in danger were either quite unaffected, or soon forgot it all. But it was not so with me. Not that I was any wiser or better than they, but because the Lord was pleased to vouchsafe me peculiar mercy, otherwise I was the most unlikely person in the ship to receive an impression, having been often before quite stupid and hardened in the very face of great dangers, and always, till this time, had hardened my neck still more and more after every reproof. I can see no reason why the Lord singled me out for mercy but this, "that so it seemed good to Him"; unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with Him "nothing is impossible."

There were no persons on board to whom I could open my mind with freedom concerning the state of my soul, none from whom I could ask advice. As to books, I had a New Testament (Stanhope, already mentioned), and a volume of Bishop *Beveridge's Sermons*, one of which, upon our Lord's passion, affected me much. In perusing the New Testament I was struck with several passages, particularly that of the fig-tree. (Luke xiii.) The case of St. Paul (1 Timothy i.), but particularly the prodigal (Luke xv.), a case, I thought, that had never been so nearly exemplified as by myself; and then the goodness of the father in receiving, nay, in running to meet such a son, and this tended to illustrate the

Lord's goodness to returning sinners—this gained upon me. I continued much in prayer. I saw that the Lord had interposed SO FAR to save me, and I hoped He would do more.

The outward circumstances helped in this place to make me still more serious and earnest in crying to Him who alone could relieve me; and sometimes I thought I could be content to die even for want of food, if I might but die a believer. Thus far I was answered, that, before we arrived in Ireland, I had a satisfactory evidence in my own mind of the truth of the gospel, as considered in itself, and its exact suitableness to answer all my needs. I saw that, by the way there pointed out, God might declare, not His mercy only, but His justice also, in the pardon of sins, on account of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. My judgment at that time embraced the sublime doctrine of God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto Himself. I had no idea of those systems which allow the Saviour no higher honour than that of an upper servant, or, at the most, a demi-God. I stood in need of an Almighty Saviour, and such a One I found described in the New Testament.

Thus far the Lord had wrought a marvellous thing. I was no longer an infidel. I heartily renounced my former profaneness. I had taken up some right notions, was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safely

through so many dangers. I was sorry for my past misspent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been deeply rooted in me as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man.

But though I cannot doubt that this change, so far as it prevailed, was wrought by the Spirit and power of God, yet still I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my more enormous sins, but I was little aware of the innate evils of my heart. I had no apprehension of the spirituality and extent of the law of God. The hidden life of a Christian, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ, and a continual dependence on Him for hourly supplies of wisdom, strength, and comfort, was a mystery of which I had as yet no knowledge. I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was past, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. I had no Christian friend or faithful minister to advise me that my strength was no more than my righteousness; and though I soon began to inquire for serious books, yet, not having spiritual discernment, I frequently made a wrong choice, and I was not brought in the way of evangelical preaching or conversation (except the few times when I heard but understood not) for six years after this period.

Those things the Lord was pleased to discover

to me gradually. I learnt them "here a little, and there a little," by my own painful experience, at a distance from the common means and ordinances, and in the midst of the same course of evil company, and bad examples, as I had been conversant with for some time. From this period I could no more make a mock at sin, or jest with holy things. I no more questioned the truth of Scripture, or lost a sense of the rebukes of conscience. Therefore I consider this as the beginning of my return to God, or rather of His return to me; but I cannot consider myself to have been a believer (in the full sense of the word) till a considerable time afterwards.

I have told you that, in the time of our distress, we had fresh water in abundance. This was a considerable relief to us, especially as our spare diet was mostly salt fish without bread. We drank plentifully, and were not afraid of wanting water, yet our stock of this likewise was much nearer to an end than we expected. We supposed that we had six large butts of water on board, and it was well that we were safely arrived in Ireland before we discovered that five of them were empty, having been removed out of their places, and stove in by the violent agitation when the ship was full of water. If we had found this out while we were at sea, it would have greatly heightened our distress, as we must have drunk more sparingly.

While the ship was refitting at Lough Swilly

I went to Londonderry. I lodged at an exceeding good house, where I was treated with much kindness, and soon recruited my health and strength. I was now a serious professor, and determined to receive the Lord's Supper the next opportunity. A few days before I signified my intention to the minister. At length the day came. I arose very early, was very particular and earnest in my private devotion, and with the greatest solemnity engaged myself to be the Lord's for ever, and only His.

This was not a formal, but a sincere surrender under a warm sense of mercies recently received, and yet, for want of a better knowledge of myself and the subtlety of Satan's temptations, I was seduced to forget the vows of God that were upon me. Upon the whole, though my views of the gospel-salvation were very indistinct, I experienced a peace and satisfaction in the ordinance that day to which I had been hitherto a perfect stranger.

The next day I was abroad with the mayor of the city, and some other gentlemen, shooting. I climbed up a steep bank, and pulling my fowling-piece after me, as I held it in a perpendicular direction it went off so near my face as to burn away the corner of my hat. Thus, when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we are no less exposed to danger than when all the elements seem conspiring to destroy us. The divine Providence, which is sufficient to deliver

us in our utmost extremity, is equally necessary to our preservation in the most peaceful situation.

During our stay in Ireland I wrote home. The vessel I was in had not been heard of for eighteen months, and was given up for lost long before. My father had no more expectation of hearing that I was alive, but he received my letter a few days before he left London. He was just going as Governor of York Fort, in Hudson's Bay, from whence he never returned. He sailed before I landed in England, or he had purposed to take me with him; but God designing otherwise, one hindrance or other delayed us in Ireland till it was too late. I received two or three affectionate letters from him, but I never had the pleasure of seeing him more. I had hopes that in three years more I should have had an opportunity of asking his forgiveness for the uneasiness my disobedience had given him, but the ship that was to have brought him home came without him. According to the best accounts we received, he was seized with the cramp when bathing, and drowned a little before her arrival in the Bay. Excuse this digression.

My father, willing to contribute all in his power to my satisfaction, paid a visit before his departure to my friends in Kent, and gave his consent to the union which had been so long talked of. Thus, when I returned to ——, I found I had only the consent of one person to

obtain: with her I as yet stood at as great an uncertainty as on the first day I saw her.

I arrived at —— the latter end of May, 1748, about the same day that my father sailed from the Nore, but found the Lord had provided me another father in the gentleman whose ship had brought me home. He received me with great tenderness, and the strongest expressions of friendship and assistance, yet not more than he has since made good, for to him, as the instrument of God's goodness, I owe my all. Yet it would not have been in the power, even of this friend, to have served me effectually, if the Lord had not met with me on my way home, as I have related. Till then I was like the man possessed with the "legion." No arguments, no persuasion, no views of interest, no remembrance of the past, or regard to the future, could have constrained me within the bounds of common prudence. But now I was in some measure restored to my senses. My friend immediately offered me the command of a ship, but upon mature consideration I declined it for the present. I had been hitherto always unsettled and careless, and therefore thought I had better make another voyage first, and learn to obey, and acquire a further insight and experience in business before I ventured to undertake such a charge. The mate of the vessel I came home in was transferred to the command of a new ship, and I engaged to go in the station of mate with him. I made a short

visit to London, etc., which did not fully answer my views. I had but one opportunity of seeing Miss ——, of which I availed myself very little, for I was always exceeding awkward in pleading my own cause *vivâ voce*. But after my return to L—— I put the question in such a manner by letter, that she could not avoid (unless I had greatly mistaken her) coming to some sort of an explanation. Her answer, though penned with abundance of caution, satisfied me, as I collected from it that she was free from any other engagement, and not unwilling to wait the event of the voyage I had undertaken. I should be ashamed to trouble you with these little details if you had not yourself desired me.

I am,

Yours, etc.

LETTER X.

Dear Sir,—My connections with sea-affairs have often led me to think that the varieties observable in Christian experience may be properly illustrated from the circumstances of a voyage. Imagine to yourself a number of vessels, at different times, and from different places, bound to the same port. There are some things in which all these would agree: the compass, the port in view, the general rules of navigation, both as to the management of the vessel, and deter-

mining their astronomical observation, would be the same in all. In other respects they would differ. Perhaps no two of them would meet with the same distribution of winds and weather. Some we see set out with a prosperous gale, and, when they almost think their passage secured, they are checked by adverse blasts; and, after enduring much hardship and danger, and frequent expectations of shipwreck, they just escape, and reach the desired haven. Others meet the greatest difficulties at first; they put forth in a storm, and are often beaten back; at length their voyage proves favourable, and they enter the port with a rich and abundant entrance. Some are hard beset with cruisers and enemies, and obliged to fight their way through. Others meet with little remarkable in their passage.

Is it not thus in the spiritual life? All true believers are to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. (Phil. iii. 16.) The word of God is their compass, Jesus is both their polar star and their righteousness. They are one body, animated by one Spirit; yet their experience, formed upon these common principles, is far from uniform. The Lord, in His first call, has a regard to the situation, temper, talents of each, and to the particular services or trials for which He has appointed them. Though all are exercised at times, yet some pass through the voyage of life much more smoothly than others. But He "who walks upon the wings of the wind, and measures

the waters in the hollow of His hand," will not suffer any of whom He has once taken charge to perish in the storms, though, for a season, many of them are ready to give up all hopes.

We must not, therefore, make the experience of others in all respects a rule to ourselves, nor our own a rule to others. Yet these are common mistakes, and productive of many more. As to myself, every part of my case has been extraordinary. I have hardly met a single instance resembling it. Few, very few, have been recovered from such a dreadful state; and the few that have been thus favoured, have generally passed through the most severe convictions; and after the Lord has given them peace, their future lives have been usually more zealous, bright, and exemplary than common. Now, as, on the one hand, my convictions were very moderate, and far below what might have been expected, from the dreadful review I had to make; so, on the other, my first beginnings, in a religious course, were as faint as can be well imagined. Who would not expect to hear, that after such a wonderful, unhoped-for deliverance as I had received, and after my eyes were in some measure enlightened to see things aright, I should immediately cleave to the Lord and His ways with full purpose of heart, and consult no more with flesh and blood? But, alas! it was far otherwise with me. I had learned to pray, I set some value upon the word

of God, and was no longer a libertine, but my soul still cleaved to the dust. Soon after my departure from L—— I began to intermit and grow slack in waiting upon the Lord; I grew vain and trifling in my conversation; and though my heart smote me often (Matt. xii. 36), yet my armour was gone, and I declined fast; and by the time we arrived at Guinea I seemed to have forgot all the Lord's mercies, and my own engagements, and was (profaneness excepted) almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations, and I became his easy prey; and for about a month he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which a few months before I could not have supposed myself any longer capable. How much propriety is there in the apostle's advice, "Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Oh! who can be sufficiently upon their guard? Sin first deceives, and then it hardens. I was now fast bound in chains. I had little desire, and no power at all to recover myself. I could not but at times reflect how it was with me; but if I attempted to struggle with it, it was in vain. I was just like Samson when he said, "I will go forth and shake myself as at other times," but he found himself helpless in the hands of his enemies.

By the remembrance of this interval the Lord has often instructed me since what a poor creature I am in myself, incapable of standing a

single hour without continual fresh supplies of strength and grace from the fountain-head.

At length the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, interposed in my behalf. My business, in this voyage, while upon the coast, was to sail from place to place in the long-boat, to purchase slaves. The ship was at Sierra Leone, and I then at the Plantanes, the scene of my former captivity, where everything I saw might seem to remind me of my ingratitude. I was in easy circumstances, courted by those who formerly despised me. The lime trees I had planted were growing tall, and promised fruit the following year, against which time I had expectations of returning with a ship of my own.

But none of these things affected me till, as I have said, the Lord again interposed to save me. He visited me with a violent fever, which broke the fatal chain, and once more brought me to myself. But, oh, what a prospect! I thought myself now summoned away. My past dangers and deliverances, my earnest prayers in the time of trouble, my solemn vows before the Lord at His table, and my ungrateful returns for all His goodness, were all present to my mind at once. Then I began to wish that the Lord had suffered me to sink into the ocean when I first besought His mercy.

For a little while I concluded the door of hope to be quite shut; but this continued not long. Weak, and almost delirious, I arose from my bed,

and crept to a retired part of the island; and here I found a renewed liberty to pray. I durst make no more resolves, but cast myself before the Lord, to do with me as He should please. I do not remember that any particular text or remarkable discovery was presented to my mind, but in general I was enabled to hope and believe in a crucified Saviour.

The burden was removed from my conscience, and not only my peace, but my health was restored; I cannot say instantaneously, but I recovered from that hour, and so fast, that when I returned to the ship, two days afterwards, I was perfectly well before I got on board. And from that time, I trust, I have been delivered from the power and dominion of sin; though, as to the effects and conflicts of sin dwelling in me, I still "groan, being burthened."

I now began again to wait upon the Lord, and though I have often grieved His Spirit, and foolishly wandered from Him since (when, alas! shall I be more wise?) yet His powerful grace has hitherto preserved me from such black declensions as this I have last recorded; and I humbly trust, in His mercy and promises, that He will be my guide and guard to the end.

My leisure hours in this voyage were chiefly employed in learning the Latin language, which I had now entirely forgot. This desire took place from an imitation I had seen of one of Horace's *Odes* in a magazine. I began the attempt under

the greatest disadvantages possible; for I pitched upon a poet, perhaps the most difficult of the poets, even Horace himself, for my first book. I had picked up an old English translation of him, which, with Castalio's Latin Bible, were all my helps. I forgot a dictionary, but I would not therefore give up my purpose. I had the edition *in usum Delphini*, and by comparing the Odes with the interpretation, and tracing the words, I could understand from one place to another, by the index, with the assistance I could get from the Latin Bible. In this way, by dint of hard industry, often waking when I might have slept, I made some progress before I returned, and not only understood the sense and meaning of many odes, and some of the epistles, but began to relish the beauties of the composition, and acquired a spice of what Mr. Law calls 'classical enthusiasm.' And, indeed, by this means I had Horace more *ad unguem* than some who are masters of the Latin tongue; for my helps were so few, that I generally had the passage fixed in my memory before I could fully understaud its meaning.

My business in the long-boat, during the eight months we were upon the coast, exposed me to innumerable dangers and perils—from burning suns and chilling dews, winds, rains, and thunder storms in the open boat; and on shore, from long journeys through the woods, and the temper of the natives, who are, in many places, cruel, treacherous, and watching opportunities for mischief.

Several boats in the same time were cut off, several white men poisoned, and from my own boat I buried six or seven with fevers. When going on shore, or returning from it in their little canoes, I have been more than once or twice overset by the violence of the surf or breach of the sea, and brought to land half dead, for I could not swim. An account of such escapes as I still remember would swell to several sheets, and many more I have, perhaps, forgotten. I shall only select one instance, as a specimen of that wonderful Providence which watched over me for good, and which, I doubt not, you will think worthy of notice.

When our trade was finished, and we were near sailing to the West Indies, the only remaining service I had to perform in the boat was to assist in bringing the wood and water from the shore. We were then at Rio Sestors. I used to go into the river in the afternoon with the sea breeze, procure my loading in the evening, and return on board in the morning with the land-wind. Several of these little voyages I had made, but the boat was grown old, and almost unfit for use. This service likewise was almost completed. One day, having dined on board, I was preparing to return to the river as formerly. I had taken leave of the captain, received his orders, was ready in the boat, and just going to put off, as we term it; that is, to let go our ropes, and sail from the ship. In that instant the captain came up from the

cabin, and called me on board again. I went, expecting further orders; but he said he had *took it in his head* (as he phrased it) that I should remain that day in the ship, and accordingly ordered another man to go in my room. I was surprised at this, as the boat had never been sent away without me before, and asked him the reason. He could give me no reason, but, as above, that so he would have it. Accordingly the boat went without me, but returned no more. She sunk that night in the river, and the person who had supplied my place was drowned.

I was much struck when we received news of the event the next morning. The captain himself, though quite a stranger to religion, so far as to deny a particular Providence, could not help being affected; but he declared that he had no other reason for countermanding me at that time, but that it came suddenly into his mind to detain me.

I wonder I omitted this in my eight letters, as I have always thought it one of the most extraordinary circumstances in my life.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged Servant.

LETTER XI.

Dear Sir,—A few days after I was thus wonderfully saved from an unforeseen danger we sailed for Antigua, and thence proceeded to Charles Town, in South Carolina. In this place there are many serious people, but I knew not how to find them out; indeed, I was not aware of a difference, but supposed that all who attended public worship were good Christians. I was as much in the dark about preaching, not doubting but whatever came from the pulpit must be very good. I had two or three opportunities of hearing a dissenting minister named Smith, who, by what I have known since, I believe to have been an excellent and powerful preacher of the gospel; and there was something in his manner that struck me, but I did not rightly understand him. The best words that men can speak are ineffectual till explained and applied by the Spirit of God, who alone can open the heart.

It pleased the Lord for some time that I should learn no more than what He enabled me to collect from my own experience and reflection.

My conduct was now very inconsistent. Almost every day, when business would permit, I used to retire into the woods and fields (for these, when at hand, have always been my favourite oratories); and, I trust, I began to taste the

sweets of communion with God in the exercises of prayer and praise. Yet I frequently spent the evening in vain and worthless company. Indeed, my relish for worldly diversions was much weakened, and I was rather a spectator than a sharer in their pleasures, but I did not as yet see "that God requires an absolute separation." (2 Cor. vi. 14–18.) Yet, as my compliance with custom and company was chiefly owing to want of light rather than to an obstinate attachment, and the Lord was pleased to preserve me from what I *knew* was sinful, I had, for the most part, peace of conscience, and my strongest desires were towards the things of God. As yet I knew not the force of that precept, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. v. 22), but very often ventured upon the brink of temptation; but the Lord was gracious to my weakness, and would not suffer the enemy to prevail against me. I did not break with the world at once (as might in my case have been expected), but I was gradually led to see the inconvenience and folly of one thing after another, and when I saw it the Lord strengthened me to give it up. But it was some years before I was set quite at liberty from occasional compliances in many things in which at this time I durst by no means allow myself.

We finished our voyage, and arrived in L——. When the ship's affairs were settled I went to London, and thence (as you may suppose) I soon repaired to Kent. More than seven years were

now elapsed since my first visit. No views of the kind could seem more imaginary, or could subsist under greater discouragements than mine had done; yet, through the overruling goodness of God, while I seemed abandoned to myself, and blindly following my own headstrong passions, I was guided by a hand that I knew not to the accomplishment of my wishes. Every obstacle was now removed. I had renounced my former follies, my interest was established, and friends on all sides consenting, the point was now entirely between ourselves, and, after what had passed, was easily concluded. Accordingly our hands were joined on the 1st of February, 1750.

The satisfaction I have found in this union, you will suppose, has been greatly heightened by reflection on the former disagreeable contrasts I had passed through, and the views I have had of the singular mercy and providence of the Lord in bringing it to pass. If you please to look back to the beginning of my sixth letter (page 54), I doubt not but you will allow that few persons have known more either of the misery or happiness of which human life as considered in itself is capable. How easily, at a time of life when I was so little capable of judging (but a few months more than seventeen), might my affections have been fixed where they could have met with no return, or where success would have been the heaviest disappointment. The long delay I met with was likewise a mercy; for had I succeeded a year or

two sooner, before the Lord was pleased to change my heart, we must have been mutually unhappy, even as to the present life. Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all my days.

But, alas! I soon began to feel that my heart was still hard and ungrateful to the God of my life. This crowning mercy, which raised me to all I could ask or wish in a temporal view, and which ought to have been an animating motive to obedience and praise, had a contrary effect. I rested in the gift, and forgot the Giver. My poor narrow heart was satisfied. A cold and careless frame as to spiritual things took place, and gained ground daily. Happy for me the season was advancing, and in June I received orders to go to L——. This roused me from my dream. I need not tell you that I found the pains of absence and separation fully proportionate to my preceding pleasure. It was hard, very hard, to part, especially as conscience interfered, and suggested to me how little I deserved that we should be spared to meet again. But the Lord supported me. I was a poor, faint, idolatrous creature; but I had now some acquaintance with the way of access to a throne of grace, by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews x. 19, 20), and peace was soon restored to my conscience. Yet, through all the following voyage, my irregular and excessive affections were as thorns in my eyes, and often made my other blessings tasteless and insipid. But He, who doth all things well,

overruled this likewise for good. It became an occasion of quickening me in prayer, both for her and myself; it increased my indifference for company and amusement; it habituated me to a kind of voluntary self-denial, which I was afterwards taught to improve to a better purpose.

While I remained in England we corresponded every post; and all the while I was on the sea afterwards, I constantly kept up the practice of writing two or three times a week (if weather and business permitted), though no conveyance homeward offered for six or eight months together. My packets were usually heavy, and as not one of them at any time miscarried, I have to the amount of near two hundred sheets of paper now lying in my bureau of that correspondence. I mention this little relief, as I contrived to soften the intervals of absence, because it had a good effect beyond my first intention. It habituated me to think and write upon a great variety of subjects, and I acquired insensibly a greater readiness of expressing myself than I should have otherwise attained. As I gained more ground in religious knowledge my letters became more serious, and at times I still find an advantage in looking them over, especially as they remind me of many providential incidents, and the state of my mind at different periods in these voyages, which would otherwise have escaped my memory.

I sailed from L—— in August, 1750, commander of a good ship. I have no very extra-

ordinary events to recount from this period, and shall therefore contract my memoirs, lest I become tedious; yet I am willing to give you a brief sketch of my history down to 1755, the year of my settlement in my present situation. I had now the command and care of thirty persons. I endeavoured to treat them with humanity, and to set them a good example; I likewise established public worship, according to the liturgy, twice every Lord's-day officiating myself. Farther than this I did not proceed while I continued in that employment.

Having now much leisure, I pursued the study of Latin with good success. I remembered a dictionary this voyage, and procured two or three other books; but still it was my hap to choose the hardest. I added Juvenal to Horace, and for prose authors I pitched upon Livy, Cæsar, and Sallust. You will easily conceive, sir, that I had hard work to begin (where I should have left off) with Horace and Livy. I was not aware of the difference of style. I had heard Livy highly commended, and was resolved to understand him. I began with the first page; and laid down a rule, which I seldom departed from, not to proceed to a second period till I understood the first, and so on. I was often at a stand, but seldom discouraged. Here and there I found a few lines quite obstinate, and was forced to break in upon my rule, and give them up, especially as my edition had only the text, without any notes

to assist me. But there were not many such; for before the close of that voyage I could, with a few exceptions, read Livy from end to end, almost as readily as an English author. And I found, in surmounting this difficulty, I had surmounted all in one. Other prose authors, when they came in my way, cost me little trouble. In short, in the space of two or three voyages I became tolerably acquainted with the best classics. (I put all I have to say upon this subject together.) I read Terence, Virgil, and several pieces of Cicero, and the modern classics, Buchanan, Erasmus, and Casimir. At length I conceived a design of becoming Ciceronian myself, and thought it would be a fine thing indeed to write pure and elegant Latin. I made some attempts towards it; but, by this time the Lord was pleased to draw me nearer to Himself, and to give me a fuller view of the blessings I possess in Him (1 Cor. i. 30, 31), and, for His sake, I was made willing to part with all my newly-acquired riches. I began to think that life was too short (especially my life) to admit of leisure for such elaborate trifling. Neither poet or historian could tell me a word of Jesus, and I therefore applied myself to those who could. The classics were at first restrained to one morning in the week, and at length quite laid aside. I have not looked in Livy these five years, and I suppose I could not now well understand him. Some passages in Horace and Virgil I still admire, but they seldom come in my way.

I prefer Buchanan's *Psalms* to a whole shelf of Elzevirs. But thus much I have gained, and more than this I am not solicitous about, so much of the Latin as enables me to read any useful or curious book that is published in that language. About the same time, and for the same reason that I quarrelled with Livy, I laid aside the mathematics. I found they not only cost me much time, but engrossed my thoughts too far; my head was literally full of schemes. I was weary of cold, contemplative truths, which can neither warm nor amend the heart, but rather tend to aggrandize self. I found no traces of this wisdom in the life of Jesus, or the writings of Paul. I do not regret that I have had some opportunities of knowing the first principles of these things, but I see much cause to praise the Lord that He inclined me to stop in time, and, whilst I was "spending my labours for that which is not bread," was pleased to set before me "wine and milk without money and without price."

My first voyage was fourteen months, through various scenes of danger and difficulty, but nothing very remarkable; and as I intend to be more particular with regard to the second, I shall only say that I was preserved from every harm; and having seen many fall on my right hand and on my left, I was brought home in peace, and restored to where my thoughts had been often directed, November 2nd, 1751. I am, Sir,

Yours.

LETTER XII.

Dear Sir,—I almost wish I could recall my last sheet, and retract my promise. I fear I have engaged too far, and shall prove a mere egotist. What have I more that can deserve your notice? However, it is some satisfaction that I am now writing to yourself only; and, I believe, you will have candour to excuse what nothing but a sense of your kindness could extort from me.

Soon after the period where my last closes—that is, in the interval between my first and second voyages after my marriage—I began to keep a sort of diary, a practice which I have since found of great use. I had in this interval repeated proofs of the ingratitude and evil of my heart. A life of ease in the midst of my friends and the full satisfaction of my wishes was not favourable to the progress of grace, and afforded cause of daily humiliation. Yet upon the whole I gained ground. I became acquainted with books which gave me a farther view of Christian doctrine and experience; particularly Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Harvey's *Meditations*, and *The Life of Colonel Gardiner*. As to preaching, I heard none but of the common sort, and had hardly an idea of any better; neither

had I the advantage of Christian acquaintance. I was likewise greatly hindered by a cowardly, reserved spirit. I was afraid of being thought precise, and though I could not live without prayer, I durst not propose it, even to my wife, till she herself first put me upon it, so far was I from those expressions of zeal and love which seem so suitable to the case of one who has had much forgiven. In a few months the returning season called me abroad again, and I sailed from L—— in a new ship, July 1752.

A seafaring life is necessarily excluded from the benefit of public ordinances and Christian communion; but, as I have observed, my loss upon these heads was at this time but small. In other respects I know not any calling that seems more favourable, or affords greater advantages to an awakened mind for promoting the life of God in the soul, especially to a person who has the command of a ship, and thereby has it in his power to restrain gross irregularities in others, and to dispose of his own time; and still more so in African voyages, as these ships carry a double proportion of men and officers to most others, which made my department very easy, and, excepting the hurry of trade, etc., upon the coast—which is rather occasional than constant—afforded me abundance of leisure.

To be at sea in these circumstances, withdrawn out of the reach of innumerable temptations, with opportunity and a turn of mind disposed to

observe the wonders of God in the great deep, with the two noblest objects of sight, the expanded heavens and the expanded ocean continually in view, and where evident interpositions of divine Providence in answer to prayer occur almost every day (Psalm cvii. 23–31); these are helps to quicken and confirm the life of faith, which in a good measure supply to a religious sailor the want of those advantages which can be only enjoyed upon the shore. And indeed, though my knowledge of spiritual things (as knowledge is usually estimated) was at this time very small, yet I sometimes look back with regret upon those scenes. I never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in my two last voyages to Guinea, when I was either almost secluded from society on ship-board, or when on shore amongst the natives. I have wandered through the woods reflecting on the singular goodness of the Lord to me, in a place where perhaps there was not a person that knew Him for very many miles round me. Many a time upon these occasions I have restored the beautiful lines of Propertius to the right owner; lines full of blasphemy and madness when addressed to a creature, but full of comfort and propriety in the mouth of a believer.

> Sic ego desertis possim bene vivere sylvis
> Quo nulla humano sit via trita pede:
> Tu mihi curarum requies, in nocte velatra
> Lumen, et in folis tu mihi turba locis.

PARAPHRASED.

In desert woods with Thee, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be!
Thou my repose from care; my light
Amidst the darkness of the night;
In solitude my company.

In the course of this voyage I was wonderfully preserved in the midst of many obvious and many unforeseen dangers. At one time there was a conspiracy amongst my own people to turn pirates, and take the ship from me. When the plot was nearly ripe, and they only waited a convenient opportunity, two of those concerned in it were taken ill one day: one of them died, and he was the only person I buried while on board. This suspended the affair, and opened a way to its discovery, or the consequence might have been fatal. The slaves on board were likewise frequently plotting insurrections, and were sometimes upon the very brink of mischief, but it was always disclosed in due time. When I have thought myself most secure, I have been suddenly alarmed with danger; and when I have almost despaired of life, as sudden a deliverance has been vouchsafed me. My stay upon the coast was long, the trade very precarious, and in the pursuit of my business, both on board and on shore, I was "in deaths often." Let the following instance serve as a specimen.

I was at a place called Mana, near Cape Mount, where I had transacted very large concerns, and

had, at the time I am speaking of, some debts and accounts to settle which required my attendance on shore, and I intended to go the next morning. When I arose I left the ship according to my purpose, but when I came near the shore the surf (or breach) of the sea ran so high that I was almost afraid to attempt landing. Indeed, I had often ventured at a worse time, but I felt an inward hindrance and backwardness which I could not account for. The surf furnished a pretext for indulging it, and after waiting and hesitating for about half-an-hour, I returned to the ship without doing my business, which I think I never did but that morning in all the time I used that trade. But I soon perceived the reason of all this. It seems, the day before I intended to land, a scandalous and groundless charge had been laid against me (by whose instigation I could never learn), which greatly threatened my honour and interest both in Africa and England, and would perhaps, humanly speaking, have affected my life, if I had landed according to my intention. I shall, perhaps, inclose a letter which will give a full account of this strange adventure, and therefore shall say no more of it here any further than to tell you that an attempt, aimed to destroy either my life or character, and which might, very probably, in its consequences, have ruined my voyage, passed off without the least inconvenience. The person most concerned owed me about a hundred pounds, which he sent me in a huff, and otherwise, perhaps, would

not have paid me at all. I was very uneasy for a few hours, but was soon afterwards comforted. I heard no more of my accusation till the next voyage, and then it was publicly acknowledged to have been a malicious calumny without the least shadow of a ground.

Such were the vicissitudes and difficulties through which the Lord preserved me. Now and then both faith and patience were sharply exercised, but suitable strength was given; and as those things did not occur every day, the study of *Latin*, of which I gave a general account in my last, was renewed, and carried on from time to time when business would permit.

I was mostly very regular in the management of my time. I allotted about eight hours for sleep and meals, eight hours for exercise and devotion, and eight hours to my books; and thus, by diversifying my engagements, the whole day was agreeably filled up, and I seldom found a day too long, or an hour to spare. My studies kept me employed, and so far it was well; otherwise, they were hardly worth the time they cost, as they led me to an admiration of false models and false maxims; an almost unavoidable consequence, I suppose, of an admiration of classic authors. Abating what I have attained of the language, I think I might have read *Cassandra* or *Cleopatra* to as good purpose as I read Livy, whom I now account an equal romancer, though in a different way.

From the coast I went to St. Christopher, and

here my idolatrous heart was its own punishment. The letters I expected from Mrs. N—— were by mistake forwarded to Antigua, which had been at first proposed as our port. As I was certain of her punctuality in writing, if alive, I concluded, by not hearing from her, that she was surely dead. This fear affected me more and more. I lost my appetite and rest. I felt an incessant pain in my stomach, and in about three weeks' time I was near sinking under the weight of an imaginary stroke. I felt some severe symptoms of that mixture of pride and madness which is commonly called a broken heart; and, indeed, I wonder that this case is not more common than it appears to be. How often do the potsherds of the earth presume to contend with their Maker! And what a wonder of mercy is it that they are not all broken? However, my complaint was not all grief—conscience had a share. I thought my unfaithfulness to God had deprived me of her, especially my backwardness in speaking of spiritual things, which I could hardly attempt, even to her. It was this thought, that I had lost invaluable, irrecoverable opportunities, which both duty and affection should have engaged me to improve, that chiefly stung me, and I thought I would have given the world to know she was living, that I might at least discharge my engagements by writing, though I was never to see her again.

This was a sharp lesson, but I hope it did me good; and when I had thus suffered some weeks, I

thought of sending a small vessel to Antigua. I did so, and she brought me several packets, which restored my health and peace, and gave me a strong contrast of the Lord's goodness to me, and my unbelief and ingratitude towards him.

In August, 1753, I returned to L——. My stay was very short at home that voyage; only six weeks. In that space nothing very memorable occurred. I shall therefore begin my next with an account of my third and last voyage. And thus I give both you and myself hopes of a speedy end to these memoirs, which begin to be tedious and minute even to myself; only I am animated by the thought that I write at your request, and have therefore an opportunity of showing myself

Your obliged Servant.

LETTER XIII.

Dear Sir,—My third voyage was shorter and less perplexed than either of the former.

Before I sailed I met with a young man who had formerly been a midshipman, and my intimate companion on board the *Harwich*. He was, at the time I first knew him, a sober youth, but I found too much success in my unhappy attempts to infect him with libertine principles. When we met at L——, our acquaintance renewed upon the

ground of our former intimacy. He had good sense, and had read many books. Our conversation frequently turned upon religion, and I was very desirous to repair the mischief I had done him. I gave him a plain account of the manner and reason of my change, and used every argument to persude him to relinquish his infidel schemes; and when I sometimes pressed him so close that he had no other reply to make, he would remind me that I was the very first person who had given him an idea of his liberty. This occasioned me many mournful reflections.

He was then going master to Guinea himself, but before his ship was ready his merchant became a bankrupt, which disconcerted his voyage. As he had no further expectations for that year I offered to take him with me as a companion, that he might gain a knowledge of the coast, and the gentlemen who employed me promised to provide for him upon his return. My view in this was not so much to serve him in his business, as to have an opportunity of debating the point with him at leisure, and I hoped in the course of my voyage my arguments, example, and prayers might have some good effect on him.

My intention in this step was better than my judgment, and I had frequent reason to repent it. He was exceedingly profane, and grew worse and worse. I saw in him a most lively picture of what I had once been, but it was very inconvenient to have it always before my eyes.

Besides, he was not only deaf to my remonstrances himself, but laboured all he could to counteract my influence upon others. His spirit and passions were likewise exceeding high, so that it required all my prudence and authority to hold him in any degree of restraint. He was as a sharp thorn in my side for some time, but at length I had an opportunity upon the coast of buying a small vessel, which I supplied with a cargo from my own, and gave him the command, and sent him away to trade on the ship's account. When we parted I repeated and enforced my best advice. I believe his friendship and regard was as great as could be expected, where principles were so diametrically opposite. He seemed greatly affected when I left him, but my words had no weight with him. When he found himself at liberty from under my eye he gave full vent to every appetite, and his violent irregularities, joined to the heat of the climate, soon threw him into a malignant fever, which carried him off in a few days. He died convinced, but unchanged.

The account I had from those who were with him was dreadful; his rage and despair struck them all with horror, and he pronounced his own fatal doom before he expired without any appearance that he either hoped or asked for mercy. I thought this awful contrast might not be improper to give you as a stronger view of the distinguishing goodness of God to me, the chief of sinners.

I left the coast in about four months, and sailed for St. Christopher. Hitherto I had enjoyed a perfect state of health, equally in every climate, for several years; but upon this passage I was visited with a fever, which gave me a very near prospect of eternity. I have obtained liberty to enclose you three or four letters, which will more clearly illustrate the state and measure of my experience at different times than anything I can say at present. One of them, you will find, was written at this period, when I could hardly hold a pen, and had some reason to believe I should write no more. I had not that full assurance which is so desirable at a time when flesh and heart fail; but my hopes were greater than my fears, and I felt a silent composure of spirit, which enabled me to wait the event without much anxiety. My trust, though weak in degree, was alone fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ; and those words, "He is able to save to the uttermost" (Heb. vii. 25), gave me great relief.

I was for a while troubled with a very singular thought. Whether it was a temptation, or that the fever disordered my faculties, I cannot say; but I seemed not so much afraid of wrath and punishment, as of being lost and overlooked amidst the myriads that are continually entering the unseen world. "What is my soul," thought I, "amongst such an innumerable multitude of beings?" And this troubled me greatly. "Perhaps the Lord will take no notice of me."

I was perplexed thus for some time, but at last a text of Scripture, very apposite to the case, occurred to my mind, and put an end to the doubt: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) In about ten days, beyond the hopes of those about me, I began to amend, and, by the time of our arrival in the West Indies, I was perfectly recovered. I hope this visitation was made useful to me.

Thus far, that is, for about the space of six years, the Lord was pleased to lead me in a secret way. I had learnt something of the evil of my heart; I had read the Bible over and over, with several good books, and had a general view of the gospel truth. But my conceptions were, in many respects, confused; not having, in all this time, met with one acquaintance who could assist my inquiries. But upon my arrival at St. Christopher's, this voyage, I found a captain of a ship from London, whose conversation was greatly helpful to me. He was, and is, a member of Mr. B——r's church, a man of experience in the things of God, and of a lively, communicative turn. We discovered each other by some casual expressions in mixed company, and soon became (so far as business would permit) inseparable. For near a month we spent every evening together on board each other's ship alternately, and often prolonged our visits till towards day-break. I was all ears; and what was better, he not only informed my understanding, but his discourse inflamed my heart.

He encouraged me to open my mouth in social prayer; he taught me the advantage of Christian converse; he put me upon an attempt to make my profession more public, and to venture to speak for God. From him, or rather from the Lord, by his means, I received an increase of knowledge; my conceptions became clearer and more evangelical, and I was delivered from a fear which had long troubled me, the fear of relapsing into my former apostasy. But now I began to understand my security to be, not by my own power and holiness, but by the mighty power and promise of God, through faith in an unchangeable Saviour. (1 Peter i. 2–4.) He likewise gave me a general view of the state of religion, with the errors and controversies of the times (things to which I had been entirely a stranger), and finally directed me where to apply in London for further instruction. With these newly-acquired advantages I left him, and my passage homewards gave me leisure to digest what I had received. I had much comfort and freedom during those seven weeks, and my sun was seldom clouded. I arrived safe in L—— August, 1754.

My stay at home was intended to be but short, and by the beginning of November I was again ready for the sea, but the Lord saw fit to overrule my design. During the time I was engaged in the slave trade I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was upon the whole satisfied with it as the appointment Providence had marked

out for me. Yet it was in many respects far from suitable. It is indeed accounted a genteel employment, and is usually very profitable, though to me it did not prove so, the Lord seeing that a large increase of wealth would not be good for me. However, I considered myself as a sort of jailer or turnkey, and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts, and shackles.

In this view I had often petitioned in my prayers that the Lord (in His own time) would be pleased to fix me in a more humane calling, and (if it might be) place me where I might have more frequent converse with His people, and be freed from those long separations from home which very often were hard to bear. My prayers were now answered, though in a way I little expected. I now experienced another sudden, unforeseen change of life. I was within two days of sailing, and to all appearance in good health as usual; but in the afternoon, as I was sitting with Mrs. N——, drinking tea by ourselves, and talking over past events, I was in a moment seized with a fit, which deprived me of sense and motion, and left me no other sign of life than breathing; I suppose it was of the apoplectic kind. It lasted about an hour, and when I recovered it left a pain and dizziness in my head, which continued with such symptoms as induced the physicians to judge it would not be safe or prudent for me to proceed on the voyage.

Accordingly, by the advice of my friend to whom the ship belonged, I resigned the command the day before she sailed, and thus I was unexpectedly called from that service, and freed from a share of the future consequences of that voyage, which proved extremely calamitous. The person who went in my room, most of the officers, and many of the crew, died, and the vessel was brought home with great difficulty.

As I was now disengaged from business I left L——, and spent most of the following year in London and in Kent. But I entered upon a new trial. You will easily conceive that Mrs. N—— was not an unconcerned spectator when I lay extended and, as she thought, expiring upon the ground. In effect, the blow that struck me reached her in the same instant. She did not indeed immediately feel it, till her apprehensions on my account began to subside; but as I grew better she became worse. Her surprise threw her into a disorder, which no physicians could define or medicines remove. Without any of the ordinary symptoms of a consumption she decayed almost visibly, till she became so weak that she could hardly bear anyone to walk across the room she was in. I was placed, for about eleven months, in what Dr. Young calls the

> "Dreadful post of observation,
> Darker every hour."

It was not till after my settlement in my present station that the Lord was pleased to restore her by

His own hand when all hopes from ordinary means were at an end. But before this took place I have some other particulars to mention, which must be the subject of the following sheet, which I hope will be the last on this subject from

Your affectionate Servant.

LETTER XIV.

Dear Sir,—By the directions I had received from my friend at St. Kitts, I soon found out a religious acquaintance in London. I first applied to Mr. B——, and chiefly attended upon his ministry when in town. From him I received many helps, both in public and private, for he was pleased to favour me with his friendship from the first. His kindness, and the intimacy between us, has continued and increased to this day, and of all my many friends I am most deeply indebted to him. The late Mr. H——d was my second acquaintance, a man of a choice spirit, and an abundant zeal for the Lord's service. I enjoyed his correspondence till near the time of his death. Soon after, upon Mr. W——d's return from America, my two good friends introduced me to him, and though I had little personal acquaintance with him till afterwards, his ministry was exceeding useful to me. I had likewise access to some

religious societies, and became known to many excellent Christians in private life. Thus, when in London, I lived at the fountain-head, as it were, for spiritual advantages. When I was in Kent it was very different; yet I found some serious persons there. But the fine, variegated woodland country afforded me advantages of another kind. Most of my time—at least some hours every day—I passed in retirement when the weather was fair, sometimes in the thickest woods, sometimes on the highest hills, where almost every step varied the prospect. A beautiful, diversified prospect gladdens my heart. When I am withdrawn from the noise and petty works of men, I consider myself as in the great temple which the Lord has built for His own honour.

The country between Rochester and Maidstone, bordering upon the Medway, was well suited to the turn of my mind, and were I to go over it now I could point to many a place where I remember to have either earnestly sought, or happily found, the Lord's comfortable presence with my soul. And thus I lived sometimes in London, and sometimes in the country, till the autumn of the following year. All this while I had two trials, more or less, upon my mind. The first and principal was Mrs. N——'s illness. She still grew worse, and I had daily more reason to fear that the hour of separation was at hand.

When faith was in exercise, I was in some measure resigned to the Lord's will; but too often

my heart rebelled, and I found it hard either to trust or to submit. I had likewise some care about my future settlement. The African trade was overdone that year, and my friends did not care to fit out another ship till mine returned. I was some time in suspense, but, indeed, a provision of food and raiment has seldom been a cause of great solicitude to me. I found it easier to trust the Lord in this point than in the former, and accordingly this was first answered. In August I received an account that I was nominated to the office of ——. These places are usually obtained, or at least sought, by dint of much interest and application, but this came to me unsought and unexpected. I knew, indeed, my good friend in L—— had endeavoured to procure another post for me, but found it pre-engaged. I found afterwards that the place I had missed would have been very unsuitable for me, and that this, which I had no thought of, was the very thing I could have wished for, affording me much leisure, and the liberty of living in my own way. Several circumstances, unnoticed by others, concurred to show me that the good hand of the Lord was as remarkably concerned in this event, as in any other leading turn of my life.

But when I gained this point, my distress in the other was doubled. I was obliged to leave Mrs. N—— in the greatest extremity of pain and illness, when the physicians could do no more, and I had no ground of hope that I should see her

again alive but this—that nothing is impossible with the Lord. I had a severe conflict, but faith prevailed: I found the promise remarkably fulfilled, of strength proportioned to my need. The day before I set out, and not till then, the burden was entirely taken from my mind. I was strengthened to resign both her and myself to the Lord's disposal, and departed from her in a cheerful frame. Soon after I was gone she began to amend, and recovered so fast, that in about two months I had the pleasure to meet her at Stone, on her journey to L——.

And now, I think, I have answered, if not exceeded, your desire. Since October, 1755, we have been comfortably settled here, and all my circumstances have been as remarkably smooth and uniform as they were various in former years. My trials have been light and few—not but that I still find, in the experience of every day, the necessity of a life of faith. My principal trial is "the body of sin and death," which makes me often to sigh out, "O, wretched man!" but I likewise can say, I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord. (Romans vii. 24, 25.)

I live in a barren land, where the knowledge and power of the gospel is very low, yet here are a few of the Lord's people; and this wilderness has been a useful school to me, where I have studied more leisurely the truths I gathered up in London. I brought down with me a considerable stock of notional truth, but I have since found

that there is no effectual teacher but God, that we can receive no farther than He is pleased to communicate, and that no knowledge is truly useful to me but what is made my own by experience. Many things I thought I had learned would not stand in an hour of temptation, till I had in this way learned them over again.

Since the year 1757 I have had an increasing acquaintance in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the gospel flourishes greatly. This has been a good school to me. I have conversed at large among all parties, without joining any; and in my attempts to hit the "golden mean" I have sometimes been drawn too near the different extremes, yet the Lord has enabled me to profit by my mistakes. In brief, I am still a learner, and the Lord still condescends to teach me. I begin at length to see that I have attained but very little; but I trust in Him to carry on His own work in my soul, and, by all the dispensations of His grace and providence, to increase my knowledge of Him and of myself.

When I was fixed in a house, and found my business would afford me much leisure time, I considered in what manner I should improve it. I devoted my life to the prosecution of spiritual knowledge, and resolved to pursue nothing but in subservience to this main design. This resolution divorced me, as I have already hinted, from the classics and mathematics. My first attempt was

to learn so much Greek as would enable me to understand the New Testament and Septuagint, and when I had made some progress this way, I entered upon Hebrew the following year, and two years afterwards, having surmised some advantages from the Syriac version, I began with that language.

You must not think that I have attained, or ever aimed at, a critical skill in any of these: I had no business with them but as in reference to something else. I never read one classic author in Greek, I thought it too late in life to take such a round in this language, as I had done in Latin. I only wanted the signification of Scriptural words and phrases, and for this I thought I might avail myself of Scapula, the Synopsis, and others who had sustained the drudgery before me. In Hebrew I can read the historical books and Psalms with tolerable ease, but in the prophetical and difficult parts I am frequently obliged to have recourse to lexicons, etc. However, I know so much as to be able, with such helps as are at hand, to judge for myself the meaning of any passage I have occasion to consult. Beyond this I do not think of proceeding if I can find better employment, for I would rather be some way useful to others, than die with the reputation of an eminent linguist.

Together with these studies, I have kept up a course of reading of the best writers in divinity that have come to my hand in the Latin and

English tongue, and some French, for I picked up French at times while I was on the sea. But within these two or three years I have accustomed myself chiefly to writing, and have not found time to read many books besides the Scriptures.

I am the more particular in this account as my case has been somewhat singular, for in all my literary attempts I have been obliged to strike out my own path, by the light I could acquire from books, as I have not had a teacher or assistant since I was ten years of age.

One word concerning my views to the ministry, and I have done. I have told you that this was my dear mother's hope concerning me; but her death, and the scenes of life in which I afterwards engaged, seemed to cut off the probability. The first desires of this sort in my own mind arose many years ago from a reflection on Galatians i. 23, 24. I could not but wish for such a public opportunity to testify the riches of divine grace. I thought I was a fit person to proclaim that faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"; and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do, I was in some hopes that perhaps sooner or later He might call me into this service.

I believe it was a distant hope of this that determined me to study the original Scriptures, but it remained an imperfect desire in my own breast till it was recommended to me by some

Christian friends. I started at the thought when first seriously proposed to me, but afterwards set apart some weeks to consider the case, to consult my friends, and to entreat the Lord's direction. The judgment of my friends, and many things that occurred, tended to encourage me.

I am not so hasty to push myself forward as I was formerly. It is sufficient that He knows how to dispose of me, and that He both can and will do what is best. To Him I commend myself. I trust that His will and my true interests are inseparable. To His name be glory for ever.

Thus I conclude my story, and presume you will acknowledge I have been particular enough. I have room for no more, but to repeat that

I am,

Sir,

Yours.

LONDON:
A. S. ROUSE, 15 AND 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

KW-229-769